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FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES
OF
BOYS

WHO MAKE
MONEY.

STRIKING-IT-RICH;
OR, FROM OFFICE BOY TO MERCHANT PRINCE. *BY A SELF-MADE MAN.*



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STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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STRIKING IT RICH

OR,

From Office Boy to Merchant Prince

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

JOE STURGESS MAKES THE ACQUAINTANCE OF SETON HALL.

"Hello, sonny! Do you live around here?"

Joe Sturgess, a sturdy, bright-eyed lad, who was sunning himself close to the water, on the Charles River side of the city of Boston, one Sunday morning, looked up and saw a fairly well-dressed man of average build, with a reddish moustache, regarding him attentively.

"I do," replied Joe.

"Know a man by the name of Bentley Morse?"

Joe looked keenly at his questioner.

Bentley Morse was his stepfather, and he wasn't an ornament to the family.

He was a lazy, good-for-nothing kind of man, who drank more than was good for him at times.

Morse had a standing grouch against the world, which he claimed was not treating him with the consideration due a person of his abilities, and he tried to get square by making the world support him without any effort on his part as a producer.

In his opinion the good things of life were not fairly apportioned.

It made him mad to see well-to-do people riding in their carriages and automobiles, and living in fine houses surrounded by green and well-kept lawns of more or less extent.

He argued that they were no better than he, and consequently had no right to luxuries denied himself.

If he had his rights, he asserted, he would be at the head

of some bank, or big store, or factory, or other money-making enterprise, and be able to hold his head up with the best in the land.

As the case stood he was obliged to put up with a cheap, unpainted two-story dwelling, facing a small dreary-looking yard which he made no effort to improve, on a shabby side street.

The duty of supporting the family consequently devolved on his wife, who did dress-making, and his stepson, who was office boy in a large dry goods house on Washington street.

Morse was not ashamed to live off their small earnings, though he was constantly putting up a big bluff about what he expected to do in the near future.

When he connected with a job where his talents would be appreciated, he told his wife, he would go to work; but he didn't propose to give his valuable time to anybody for nothing.

Mrs. Morse was a meek and gentle woman who had long since ceased to argue the matter with her shiftless husband.

She accepted her unfortunate lot in life and did the best she could under the circumstances.

Her son Joe had sized his step-father up correctly and had a very poor opinion of him as a man.

The only thing that could be said in his favor was that he did not ill-treat his wife, even when intoxicated; but he had a lofty and exasperating way of enforcing his authority that was not pleasant to the family.

"Yes," replied Joe to the stranger who had accosted him, "I know Bentley Morse. He is my stepfather."

"Indeed," replied the sandy-featured man, looking at the

boy with some interest and curiosity. "So Morse is your stepfather?"

Joe nodded as if the fact did not afford him great satisfaction.

"Ever hear him speak of Seton Hall?"

The boy shook his head.

"That's strange," replied the man. "I used to work with your father when he was clerk for the Boylston Bank. We are old chums."

"Are you Seton Hall?"

"That's my name," answered the man, as though he expected that Joe would be greatly impressed by the fact.

"I suppose you wish to be directed to our house?" said Joe.

"I do."

"I will show you the way."

"All right," said the man. "How is my friend Morse getting along?" he continued as they walked up the street together.

"Not very well," replied Joe.

"I'm sorry to hear it. What's the matter?"

"He doesn't care to work," replied the boy, bluntly.

"Why not? Is he living on his money?"

"No. He's living on mother and I."

Seton Hall rubbed his chin and looked hard at his young companion.

"Is he unable to work?" he asked.

"He's able enough, but he can't find a situation to suit him."

"Oh, I see. He doesn't want to lower himself in the eyes of the world. Well, I can't say that I blame him. I shouldn't care to accept a plebeian position myself."

"Are you still working for the Boylston Bank?" asked Joe, curiously.

"Ahem! No. I resigned from the bank some time ago. At present I am a gentleman of leisure."

Mr. Hall said it in a tone intended to convey the impression that it wasn't necessary for him to work unless he felt like it.

Joe was not deceived.

He was a pretty shrewd boy.

He judged that Mr. Hall was suffering from the same complaint as his stepfather.

"How long is it since you saw Mr. Morse?" he asked.

"I haven't seen him in a considerable time. Why do you call him Mr. Morse? He's your father, isn't he?"

"He's my stepfather."

"That's all the same."

"No, it isn't."

"Don't you and he get along well together?"

"I didn't say that we didn't."

"I should infer so from your manner."

Joe remained silent.

"Do you rent the house where you live or does your—ahem!—stepfather own it?"

"We pay rent every month. About all that Mr. Morse owns is his clothes."

"I suppose you help support the house?"

"I do."

"Where do you work?"

"At Henderson's department store on Washington street."

"What do you do?"

"I'm in the office."

"Do you run errands and sweep out?"

"I run errands and do other work, but we have porters to sweep the place out."

"I apprehend that your wages are not large?"

"No, I don't receive as much as the superintendent."

"You seem inclined to be witty," replied Seton Hall, disapprovingly.

"I answered your question, didn't I?"

"After a fashion you did. How much do you get?"

"I don't think you've any right to ask that question."

"Does your mother work, too?"

"She does dressmaking. If Mr. Morse did his duty she would not be obliged to take in work. I think every man ought to support his family."

"I won't say you're not right, young man; but no man should be expected to take a position below his natural station in life."

"Suppose he can't get just what suits him, do you think he should remain idle and starve?"

"I think his family ought to come to his rescue."

"That's all right if a man is sick, or can't work for some physical reason, but Mr. Morse can't fall back on any such excuse. He's strong and hearty. If I was in his place I'd be willing to clean the streets till I could find something better to do," said Joe, sturdily.

"My friend Morse is a gentleman, and gentlemen do not stoop to cleaning the streets."

"I suppose you consider yourself a gentleman, too?"

"Undoubtedly, young man. My family was one of the best in Boston at one time," said Seton Hall, loftily.

"What happened to your family? Had hard luck?"

"My family is non sum qualis eram."

"What's that?" asked Joe.

"Latin."

"What does it mean?"

"Freely translated it means we are not what we were."

"Why couldn't you have said so in plain English, then I'd have understood you?"

"It was merely a lapsus linguae, that is, a slip of the tongue."

"Are you a college graduate?"

"Ahem! Not exactly; but I attended one of the most select schools in the State."

"I suppose you are well educated, then?"

"Few better, young man," replied Seton Hall, pompously. "I ought to be Governor of the State, or even President of the United States. I flatter myself that I would lend a lustre to either position. Some men, however, never attain the exalted places for which they are peculiarly fitted."

"You have my sympathy," replied Joe, dryly.

Mr. Hall looked at him suspiciously, but the boy's face was perfectly sober.

"This is rather a shabby street," said Hall, as they turned into a narrow and not over-clear thoroughfare. "Do you reside in this vicinity?"

"We live in the third house from the corner on this side."

Seton Hall viewed the Morse dwelling with evident tokens of disapproval.

He was disappointed.

Being in hard luck himself, owing to circumstances over which he did not care to exercise control, he had sought out his old friend and boon companion, Bentley Morse, under the impression that he might be able to sponge upon him for a few days, or perhaps a couple of weeks, for Seton Hall had no lack of nerve.

He thought Morse was better fixed than he appeared to be.

However, he wouldn't back out now.

Perhaps he could remain all day and over night with his old friend at any rate.

Even the smallest favor was never turned down by Mr. Hall.

He found it convenient sometimes to pocket his family pride and submit to the inevitable with the best grace he could muster.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH SETON HALL SHOWS HE IS A GOOD GRAFTER.

Joe led his companion into the front yard and thence up to the door, which he opened and ushered Mr. Hall into a neat but shabby sitting-room, occupied by Mr. Morse, who sat by the window, a Sunday paper in his hands, and his slippered feet elevated against the wall at an angle of forty-five degrees.

"Mr. Morse, here is a visitor to see you," said Joe.

"A visitor to see me!" ejaculated the head of the house in surprise. "Why, if it isn't my old friend Seton Hall."

He dropped his feet to the floor, got up hastily and advanced with outstretched hand toward his visitor.

Joe didn't stop to hear any more, but went back to the kitchen where his patient little mother was preparing dinner for her unworthy spouse and her own bright son."

"Yes, it's me all right," said Hall, quite pleased with the warm reception he received. "How is the world using you, Bentley?"

Mr. Hall helped himself to a chair without waiting to be asked.

"Not very well," replied Morse sourly. "I've been getting the short end of everything in the last few years."

"How is that?"

"Things don't seem to pan out. How are you making out yourself?"

"Rather under the weather at present, but that's between you and me. Understand?"

"Then we're in the same boat?"

"Not quite. I haven't a family to support like you have."

"It's a great expense these times," replied Morse, just as if he was working like a dray-horse to make ends meet.

"I should imagine so," answered Hall, stifling a grin under his hand, for Joe had, as we have seen, given him an idea of how the land lay. "Provisions and everything are very high."

"Very," nodded Morse, as though he were an authority on such matters.

"Rent is also high, I suppose?"

"Simply exorbitant. Landlords ought to be exterminated."

"In which case we'd all live rent free."

"Every man is entitled to a decent roof over his head," said Morse, mounting his favorite hobby.

"That's right," chuckled Seton Hall, taking his cue from his friend's words.

"Every man is entitled to a good living even if circumstances fail to provide him with suitable work."

"Correct," agreed Hall.

"No man ought to be expected to work at anything beneath his attainments."

"I agree with you."

"If I was running this country things would be different."

Seton Hall hadn't the least doubt about it.

"I wouldn't allow a few men to have all the money."

"And all the fat jobs," grinned Hall.

"Exactly. It's an outrage the way things are. Look at me."

Mr. Hall was looking at him.

"I am not getting a square deal. A few bloated non-producers are living on the fat of the land, like fat spiders, while I and others have to suffer. There ought to be a change."

"I wouldn't object to a change," said Mr. Hall. "In fact I'd like to have a pocket full of it."

"I wonder how long the people are going to stand for this kind of thing?"

"They have the ballot box," suggested Hall.

"Bah! What's the ballot box? Who can you vote for? An honest and square man like you or me? Not at all. Men of our stamina do not get a chance to show what is in them. The people are so thick-headed that they pass us by and put up professional politicians, men who suck the available funds of our cities and country dry. Don't I see them riding in their autos every day? Is that what we pay them for? Who provides the autos? I am simply disgusted with the way things are going. The idea that a man of my ability should be compelled to go around without a decent pair of shoes when the people's money is being squandered like water."

"Yes, it's tough," coincided Seton Hall, sniffing the fragrance of the midday meal from afar and wondering if he would be invited to grace the family board.

It was a matter of some anxiety to him as he had enjoyed but a meagre breakfast.

At that moment Joe came to the sitting-room door and looked in.

He was wondering how long Mr. Hall expected to remain, and whether his stepfather intended asking him to dinner.

"What do you want?" growled Mr. Morse, on seeing his stepson.

"Nothing," replied Joe, turning away.

"Hold on," cried the head of the house. "Tell your mother to put on another plate. You'll remain to dinner, won't you, old man?"

Hall could have cackled with joy, but he felt that he must not show undue haste in accepting the invitation.

"I should like to, Bentley," he said, scratching his chin in a reflective kind of way, "but——"

"But what?"

"I have an engage——" he began, fumbling for his watch, which he didn't produce, as it happened to be at a

pawnbroker's. "Well, seeing it's you, and we've been so long parted, I'll let the engagement slide and eat with you."

"That's right. Make yourself at home."

Seton Hall had no objection to doing that.

"Joe," said Morse, "tell your mother we have a guest—an old friend of mine—for dinner. Tell her to do things up brown. Do you hear?"

Joe heard, but failed to reply as he vanished in the direction of the kitchen.

"I don't like that boy," continued Mr. Morse. "He's too independent for me. His mother has spoiled him completely."

"What's the matter with him?" asked Hall complacently, now assured of a square meal.

"He does not show the deference that a son should a father."

"You can hardly expect a stepson to——"

"But I do expect it," insisted Morse. "I am the head of this house. I have rights that should be respected. My wife is properly subservient, why shouldn't her son imitate her example?"

Seton Hall replied that he guessed Morse's point was well taken.

"The head of a family ought to be deferred to," went on Morse. "His comfort ought to be always the first consideration. By the way, Seton, are you married?"

"No, I am thankful to say. I find it difficult enough to support myself without the added burden of a wife and perhaps a family. The only independent men in this world are the single ones. Of course if a man has plenty of money then he can afford the luxury of a wife, otherwise he is foolish to tie himself up like a slave."

In a short time Joe returned and announced that dinner was on the table.

Seton Hall rose with some alacrity, as if the chair had suddenly grown too hot for him, and accompanied Mr. Morse to the poorly-furnished dining-room.

"Mrs. Morse," said her husband loftily, "allow me to introduce my friend, Seton Hall. Hall, this is my wife."

The little woman bowed.

She was not particularly struck with the visitor, especially as Joe had not pictured him in glowing colors.

"Delighted to make your acquaintance, madam," said Hall, in his smoothest way. "It is a great pleasure to meet an old friend surrounded by his estimable wife and—son."

The meal, which was a plain but substantial one, was enjoyed by Mr. Hall, who permitted his host to force a second helping of meat on him.

In fact he made an inroad into everything in sight, as he was not sure that any supper would be coming his way unless his friend Morse pressed him to remain.

However, having located Morse, he expected to have no difficulty in enjoying his hospitality at intervals.

He had a variety of schemes for raising money in view, and did not doubt but that he could induce Morse to join him in one or more of them.

Morse seemed to be just the kind of man who could be persuaded to go into anything that promised to put him square with the world.

Joe's stepfather was by nature something of a chump.

He could be easily led by a specious adviser.

Seton Hall was shrewd enough to see that, and he determined to profit by it.

He had no real friendship for Morse.

All the interest Hall took in him was to make use of him as occasion served.

Although Hall had nothing in view just then he took Morse out for a walk after dinner, and then began to throw out hints about some profitable venture he had under consideration.

"Maybe I can let you in on it," he said confidentially.

"I wish you would," replied Morse, eagerly. "I'm terribly short of funds."

"Well, I'll see what I can do. If it is possible to get you in depend on it I'll do it," slapping his friend familiarly on the back.

He worked the imaginary game up so well that Morse insisted that he should stay to supper, which Hall obligingly did.

After which, seeing there was no chance for a bed, he reluctantly took his leave.

CHAPTER III.

HOW JOE NABS A SHOPLIFTER AND MAKES A REPUTATION FOR HIMSELF.

Joe Sturgess was at his post in the office of Henderson's big department store promptly at eight o'clock on Monday morning as usual.

He had been working at the store for nearly a year and had never yet been reported late by the time-keeper at the employees' entrance.

His duties were chiefly connected with the superintendent's office, but he was also at the beck and call of the cashier, chief stenographer and first bookkeeper.

Occasionally Mr. Henderson called on him for some trifling service.

His chief business so far had been to carry messages to the heads of the different departments in the store when it was not advisable to use the telephone, and to take messages to various wholesale houses in town.

He had acquitted himself so well as to attract the attention of the superintendent, whose name was Harker, and he had lately been intrusted with more important errands than usually fell to the office boy.

His pay which had been \$4 a week was raised to \$6, and he was in addition personally commended by the superintendent for the prompt and efficient manner in which he carried out his orders.

Monday was bargain day at Henderson's, and the fact was always impressed on the public by large and enticing advertisements in the Sunday morning papers.

Some bargain sales of especial value lasted only an hour, or between certain specified hours; but the general run were in force all day.

As a matter of course the store was crowded with women attracted by the opportunity to make certain purchases at a reduced rate for that day only.

The same kind of goods were seldom if ever offered on succeeding Mondays.

It was Mr. Henderson's policy to have something different on his bargain tables each Monday, so that those who missed the bargains and were anxious to secure the goods

would have to pay the regular price or go without for weeks afterward.

Some goods marked down, for instance, from \$1.50 to 98 cents; or from \$1 to 69 and 79 cents, were not such bargains as they appeared to be.

But that fact was up to the customer to discover.

The salesladies had a method of working off slow-selling stuff offered on the bargain tables at an apparent reduction to sharp-eyed bargain hunters that often elicited the admiration of the floor-walkers.

At any rate although hundreds of ladies secured undoubted bargains at Henderson's on Monday, the proprietor of the store did not as a rule lose any money.

Most of the goods offered at bargain rates had been purchased by Henderson's astute buyers particularly for these sales at cut-rate wholesale prices.

The public got the benefit of the reduction and Henderson made a profit as well.

Manufacturers in every line of business need ready cash so badly at times that they are forced to make sacrifices to raise it, and Henderson's buyers were always on the lookout for such opportunities—that was part of their business.

Although Joe Sturgess was only the office boy, and was not expected to know anything outside his actual duties, he was always picking up some fresh bit of information about how things were run at the store.

He was interested in the department store business, and as he expected to grow up with the establishment, it was his opinion that he couldn't learn too much about the house.

He was a great favorite with the girls, and when he occasionally asked them questions on matters connected with their especial line they always answered him to the best of their knowledge and never put him off with pert replies.

Henderson employed quite a number of argus-eyed persons, mostly women, as detectives, and these people had their work cut out for them on Mondays especially, for the professional shoplifter, as well as the kleptomaniac, were always active on that day.

Joe knew most of these detectives by sight because they often brought some person caught lifting goods to the superintendent's office.

These unhappy people were usually respectable persons who had yielded to impulse or a solitary temptation.

They were rarely turned over to an officer, but, after the goods had been taken from them, were dismissed with a warning.

There was a special room for the reception of the regular female crook, caught in the act, where she was searched before being handed over to the police.

Weird and wonderful were the means and methods adopted by the shoplifter for "doing" the store, and more often than not they got away with the goods undetected.

On the Monday morning with which we open this chapter the store was crowded as usual.

About half-past eleven the superintendent called Joe into his office and gave him a message to deliver to the head floor-walker of the main floor.

He handed the message to the man and started to return to the elevator.

As he approached the silk and velvet counter he saw a handsomely dressed young lady examining some goods.

At that moment the saleslady walked about a yard away and turned her back on the customer to pick a bolt of silk off the shelf.

Joe saw the handsome young woman give a quick, covert glance around and then snatch part of a bolt of silk from under the pile in front of her and dexterously slip it into a long, secret pocket on the inside of her coat.

Only an expert shoplifter could have accomplished the job with such neatness and despatch.

The boy was simply paralyzed at the audacious act.

He could hardly believe that so aristocratic looking a lady would be guilty of such a deed.

Still the evidence of his eyes was before him and his duty to the store was plain.

He looked around, but not one of the store detectives was in sight.

Neither was there a floor-walker within hail.

He felt that he had a delicate matter on his hands, and he argued that the easiest way was the best.

Had he known that he was up against one of the star shoplifters of the town he might have been less particular.

"I beg your pardon, madam," he said, walking up to the young lady, who started slightly as he laid his hand on her arm. "The superintendent would like to see you in his office."

"See me!" exclaimed the shoplifter, whose suspicions were at once aroused.

"Yes, madam," replied Joe respectfully, who, in his inexperience thought he might induce the young lady to accompany him to the office on the second floor.

Had she been merely an amateur thief, or if this was her first essay at lifting a piece of goods on the sly, he might have succeeded, but with the woman in question he was only wasting his words.

She jumped to the conclusion that this boy was one of the store detectives, and had caught her in the act.

She knew what was meant by a visit to the superintendent's office.

Her only course was instant escape in the least conspicuous way possible.

She was accompanied by an accomplice, a tall, powerfully built man, with a heavy black moustache, who was standing carelessly against a counter a dozen feet away, with his wary eye on the lookout in her interest.

It was his place to interfere in case she was caught by any one of those connected with the store, make a rumpus, if need be, so that in the confusion she could get away and lose herself in the crowd.

"I have no business with the superintendent," she replied haughtily, making a sign of distress to her accomplice.

He understood the signal and advanced to find out what was the trouble.

Her answer placed Joe in a quandary.

Before he had decided what to do the lady's escort came up.

"What's the trouble?" he asked brusquely.

Joe looked up, and mistaking him for one of the store detectives, whom he greatly resembled, blurted out:

"I saw this lady take a small bolt of silk off the counter and——"

"How dare you accuse me of theft?" cried the young woman, flashing an indignant look at the boy.

"Because you have the goods under your coat, madam," replied Joe Sturgess, coolly.

The lady's escort raised his cane to strike the boy.

His purpose in doing so was to create the necessary excitement that would give his companion the chance to slip away in the confusion.

It happened, however, that the floor-walker of that section came upon the scene at that moment.

Seeing trouble ahead he seized the man's uplifted arm and arrested the blow.

At the same moment the shoplifter started to move hurriedly away.

Joe was too quick for her, and grabbed her by the arm.

"How dare you!" she cried, striking at him.

Joe caught her other arm.

The lady at the counter uttered an exclamation of surprise, while the cash girl above, who was a nervous little thing, uttered a shrill scream that alarmed the whole floor, and brought a detective and two other floor-walkers to the spot.

The lady customers in that vicinity were greatly startled, and many of them crowded forward to ascertain what had happened.

The shoplifter struggled desperately to escape from Joe, kicking him in the shins and trying to throw him.

Finding that he was getting the worst of the matter, Joe, satisfied now that the woman must be a professional thief, dexterously tripped her up and she fell to the floor.

"What's the trouble here?" demanded the detective, pushing his way forward, as the shoplifter fell back on that last of feminine resorts, a succession of screams.

"I've caught a thief," replied Joe. "She took a bolt of silk off that counter and shoved it under her coat."

"I think I know you, madam," said the detective. "We've been trying to catch you for a long time."

He lifted the flap of her coat and saw the top of the silk bolt just peeping out of a deep pocket made expressly to hold such things.

"Ha! I see we've got you with the goods at last," he said, in a tone of satisfaction. "Just get up, please, and come with me quietly, or I'll place the handcuffs on you. Stand back, ladies," to the crowd. "Stand back. Hold that man, Stebbins," to the floor-walker, "and bring him along, too. Give him a hand, Brown," to another floor-walker.

The accomplice would have got away only the crowd was so dense that he couldn't make his way through it, though he tried desperately to do so, thrusting screaming women customers aside.

The two floor-walkers managed to hold him at last.

Joe held on to one of the shoplifter's arms while the detective gripped the other.

The young lady screamed and made a terrible scene, but she was up against it hard and knew it.

She and her accomplice were hustled over to the elevator and thrust into the cage with little ceremony, for they were entitled to no respect.

They were marched to the superintendent's room first and there Joe told his story, clearly and to the point.

There was no going behind the evidence on the woman's person, so the superintendent ordered her to be taken to

the private room and searched while he telephoned to the police.

A whole lot of other stuff was found on the woman, though it did not all belong to Henderson's store, for she had been working other shops before coming there.

She and the man were turned over to a couple of officers, and the detective who had come to Joe's relief went along to press the charge.

The superintendent called Joe into his room.

"Young man," he said, "you have done the store a remarkably fine service in detecting that woman and preventing her escape. She is Nance Goodwin, the queen of the shoplifters. One of the 'cutest women in the business. She has eluded detection for a long time, though the detectives of every department store in the city have been constantly on the lookout for her. Mr. Henderson is bound to reward you for what you've done. For myself I will say that you're an ornament to our establishment, and this service will be the making of you. I will also see that you are taken care of."

Then he dismissed Joe, whose brilliant achievement was already being circulated all over the store, and he was raised to the highest pinnacle of popular regard.

CHAPTER IV.

JOE RECEIVES A SMALL REWARD.

When Mr. Henderson appeared about noon and the superintendent told him about the capture of the notorious shoplifter by Joe Sturgess he was very much pleased.

He sent for the boy, complimented him highly for his conduct in the matter, and handed him \$100 in bills.

He also told the superintendent to raise Joe's wages another dollar a week.

Of course the incident was printed in all the Boston afternoon papers, and Joe's name appeared for the first time in cold type.

Long before the boy reached home his stepfather had read the story in the paper and had called his wife's attention to it.

"He ought to get some reward for that," said Mr. Morse eagerly.

He pictured to himself the handling of that reward, which, as the boy's guardian by marriage, he considered he had the right to do.

Joe's mother saw through his motive, and she hoped her son, if he got a monetary reward, would put it in a savings bank in his own name.

She had learned by experience that her second husband was not the right kind of man to take charge of other people's property.

She made no answer to Mr. Morse's remark, and her husband retired to the sitting-room to read the story again and think the matter up.

Supper was ready when Joe entered the house.

"I see you've got yourself in the newspaper," said Mr. Morse, soon after they sat down to the table.

"Well, what of it?" asked Joe. "Did you read the story, mother?" he said, turning to the only parent to whom he acknowledged allegiance.

"Your father read it to me," replied the little woman. "I should like you to tell me how the affair happened."

Joe hastened to give her the full particulars, to which Mr. Morse listened attentively.

The boy wound up by stating that his wages had been raised another dollar, and that Mr. Henderson had given him \$100 in money.

"One hundred dollars, eh?" exclaimed Mr. Morse, pricking up his ears.

Mrs. Morse regretted that Joe had mentioned the matter at the table.

That \$100 would be a great temptation to her worthless husband, and she doubted not that he would leave no stone unturned to get hold of it.

"You brought the money home, I presume?" went on Mr. Morse, licking his chops.

"Why do you ask?" asked Joe, shortly.

"Because as your father you will no doubt wish me to take charge of it for you," replied Mr. Morse. "I will be glad to accommodate you."

"Thank you," replied Joe, dryly; "but I think I'm old enough to look after my own money."

"Ahem! I will not deny that you're a smart boy," replied his stepfather suavely; "but as your legal guardian——"

"You are not my guardian. My mother is the only one I acknowledge as such."

Mr. Morse bit his lips with some disappointment.

Then a brilliant idea struck him.

He knew he could bulldoze his wife very easily.

"Very well, Joe," he said in a resigned tone, "if you prefer your mother to keep your money I have nothing to say. She is your mother, of course, and it is natural you should think of her first. It would give me great pleasure to enjoy your confidence and do you a little service, but as long as you would rather trust your mother, why it's all right. She will take as good care of the \$100 as I would."

"I think I will keep it and put it in a bank to-morrow," said Joe. "I don't believe mother cares for the responsibility."

The boy knew that his stepfather wouldn't give his wife a moment's peace if she had the money in her possession until she turned it over to him, and he did not intend that his mother should be harassed in the matter.

Mr. Morse was disappointed again.

Then another brilliant idea occurred to him.

If Joe intended keeping the money till the next day Mr. Morse saw the chance of abstracting it from his clothes after he had gone to bed and was asleep.

Once he got it in his hands he was indifferent as to how much the boy kicked about it.

He could assert his authority as his stepfather and hold on to it.

So instead of trying to influence Joe against banking the money he said nothing, and chuckled quietly to himself.

Nothing further was said upon the subject, and after supper Mr. Morse borrowed ten cents from his wife and hiked himself to the corner saloon.

"I am sorry that you mentioned the money that Mr. Henderson gave you," said Mrs. Morse after her husband had left the house.

"What difference does it make, mother?" said Joe.

"I'm afraid your stepfather will try to get it away from you."

"If he does he's welcome to it," grinned the boy.

"Have you got it about you?"

"Yes."

"Then you'd better let me have it. I'll hide it till you go to the store to-morrow morning. It will be safer with me as long as Mr. Morse does not suspect I have it."

"All right, mother, here it is," and Joe tossed her five \$20 bills.

When Mr. Morse returned from the saloon that evening after eleven o'clock Joe was fast asleep in his bed in the front attic.

Mrs. Morse was also asleep, a fact that her husband was very careful to ascertain.

Then he removed his shoes, took the lamp, which was turned down, from the small table, stole out onto the landing and softly mounted the stairs to the attic.

The attic door was open and he shaded the lamp with his hand and listened.

He heard Joe's regular breathing and was satisfied all was right.

Entering the room he looked around for the boy's clothes and saw them on a chair.

Putting the lamp on the floor he took up Joe's trousers first and examined all the pockets.

There was perhaps forty cents in change which he did not disturb.

Then he turned his attention to Joe's vest, but without result.

Finally he tackled the boy's jacket.

"What the dickens did he do with that \$100?" muttered Mr. Morse in a tone of disappointment, as he tossed the jacket back on the chair.

He scratched his head and looked around the poorly-furnished room.

He took up the pants and vest and went over them again, but with no better luck.

After considering a moment he went over to the small cheap bureau, where Joe kept his few possessions, and examined it thoroughly.

While he was thus engaged Joe suddenly woke up and discovered his stepfather in his room and engaged in a rather questionable occupation.

"What are you looking for, Mr. Morse?" he asked in a solemn tone.

His stepfather turned around in a startled way at the sound of his voice and slammed the drawer shut.

"I've got a toothache," fluttered Mr. Morse. "I was looking for your bottle of drops."

Joe knew that he wasn't telling the truth.

"You will find the drops on the shelf over the wash basin," replied the boy. "I don't keep bottles in my drawers."

Mr. Morse hastily walked over to the shelf, singled out the bottle of drops and left the attic.

Joe chuckled as he looked after his retreating figure.

"He didn't come up here for toothache drops," he said to himself. "He was searching for that \$100. I noticed right away that my clothes were disarranged, and that showed that he had been through them. It's lucky that mother took the money to keep for me till morning. It is evident that she suspected Mr. Morse would be up to some such trick as I caught him at. I'll bet he feels greatly dis-

appointed at the results of his hunt. He wouldn't have found that money up here if he'd looked for it all night. He'd like to have the pleasure of spending that \$100. It would be a regular windfall for him. But I guess he'll have to continue to get along on the small amounts he begs from mother. For a healthy, able-bodied man he's mighty small potatoes in my estimation."

Thus soliloquizing Joe lay down and went to sleep again.

CHAPTER V.

DESCRIBES HOW SETON HALL TURNED THE SCREWS ON HOMER CARROLL.

Next morning Joe had to appear in court at the examination of Nance Goodwin, the shoplifter, and her confederate.

Both were held for trial—Nance on the charge of grand larceny and her associate, who gave his name as Howard Sands, as accessory.

The man's bail was placed at \$1,000, and a lawyer came forward and qualified for that amount, which gave Sands his freedom until he had to appear for his trial.

On his way back to the store Joe saw Seton Hall talking to the special messenger of Henderson's establishment, a young man by the name of Homer Carroll.

Every morning Carroll carried the preceding day's receipts of the store to the Tradesmen's Bank.

He also collected the regular running accounts from Henderson's influential customers at the end of thirty, sixty or ninety days, as the case might be.

When one of these customers wanted to select from a new line of goods at her home, Carroll always carried an assortment of the stuff for her to examine, and his services was always included in the price charged.

Sometimes he carried \$200 or \$300 worth of small merchandise in a suit case or two, and on some occasions even more than that when sterling silver or gold mounted articles were sent for.

Only a man who enjoyed the complete confidence of Mr. Henderson could hold the job; and in addition he had to possess perfect manners, a persuasive tongue and other irreproachable qualifications.

In all these respects Homer Carroll filled the bill, and his outward person corresponded with his talents as an expert salesman.

Carroll, however, had drawbacks of which his employer was ignorant.

He was a high roller in a small way, and his salary didn't begin to satisfy his numerous wants.

The result was he took to gambling to try to make up the deficiency.

For a long time luck played into his hands, and he had plenty of money to cut a splurge with.

Lately the fickle goddess Fortune had turned her back on him, and he found himself in a state of financial embarrassment.

He not only owed various amounts to friends, which was not a great matter, but he owed a considerable sum to Howard Sands, the partner of Nance Goodwin, who was a professional gambler.

Seton Hall had once been hand in glove with Howard Sands, but when he got completely broke Sands shook him on account of his persistent efforts to live on the gambler.

When Sands was arrested with the shoplifter he sent for Seton Hall, had a quiet talk with him about Homer Carroll, and sent him to hunt up the messenger with a request for immediately payment of his gambling claim.

Hall was instructed to press the matter with threats of exposure in case Homer Carroll failed to show cause.

The actual payment of his claim was not really what the gambler was aiming at.

He had a deeper purpose in view.

He believed, with good reason, that he had Carroll where the shoe pinches, and he meant to make capital out of the fact.

Seton Hall was willing to do 'most anything to raise the wind, and as the gambler knew his character like a book, he sized the man up as a valuable accomplice as occasion served.

Hall had just met Homer Carroll on the corner of the street and introduced himself as an envoy from Howard Sands, when Joe Sturgess came along and saw them together.

The boy immediately jumped to the conclusion that Seton Hall was on friendly terms with Carroll, and he was rather surprised, for he believed that Hall was not a desirable associate for such a smart and gentlemanly young fellow as the messenger of Henderson's department store.

However, it was none of his business, so he passed on and soon forgot all about the circumstance.

In the meantime Hall broached the object of the interview to Homer Carroll.

He produced Carroll's I O U for \$600, made out in favor of Howard Sands, and suggested that immediate payment would be considered as a favor.

"I am sorry," answered Carroll, "but it isn't possible for me to pay just now. Besides, Mr. Sands told me I could take my time."

"That's all right," replied Hall glibly; "that was before Sands got into this difficulty at your store. Now he needs money the worst way, and is calling in all his loans and due bills. He instructed me to tell you that he must have the money within a day or two."

"But I can't pay within a day or two," replied Carroll irritably.

"Why not?" said Hall in a business-like tone.

"Because I can't," returned the messenger angrily.

"You get a good salary, don't you?"

"That's my business."

"When can you pay this I O U?"

"I don't know," replied Carroll shortly.

"Is that the answer I'm to take back to Sands?"

"You can take back any answer you please to him."

"Very well, Mr. Carroll. Don't blame Sands then if he sends this I O U by me to Mr. Henderson with the request that he use his influence with you to settle it."

Homer Carroll gave a gasp of consternation at those words.

He hadn't expected any such development as that.

If Howard Sands carried out that plan, and sent a full explanation with the I O U to Mr. Henderson, he (Carroll) would be up against it for fair.

The department store proprietor was known to have very set notions about some things—drinking and gambling in particular.

He strongly objected to these failings in his employees, and several persons attached to the store had been discharged for indulging in one or the other of these vices.

A gambling debt for so large an amount as \$600 would be regarded by Mr. Henderson as an extremely serious matter, and Carroll felt certain it would cause his instant dismissal from his position.

No other responsible house would hire him without a reference from Henderson, and it would be out of the question to expect the merchant to give him one under the circumstances of the case.

All these facts flashed through Carroll's brain in the twinkling of an eye after Seton Hall had uttered his veiled threat.

"Oh, I say, Mr. Hall, it won't do for Mr. Sands to do that," he palpitated in a funk. "Why, man, it would ruin me."

"Well, you ought to know," returned Hall, carelessly. "If such a course is going to put you in a bad hole I should imagine that it would be to your interest to make an effort to satisfy Sands's claim."

"But it is utterly impossible for me to raise so large a sum as \$600 in a few days. I must have time."

"I have no doubt that Sands wouldn't press you if he wasn't in the deuce of a hole himself. He must have money to pay a lawyer to defend both Miss Goodwin and himself when their trial comes on. As money isn't to be picked up at haphazard he is compelled to call upon all his available resources, of which this I O U is one. He will give you two or three days to turn around in before proceeding to extremes, which he will regret to have to do in case you fail to come to time. You really mustn't blame Sands, my dear fellow. Self-preservation is the first law of nature."

"But I don't know where I could raise over \$100 to save my life," almost groaned Carroll.

"Well, now, that's strange," replied Hall in a purring tone.

"How is it strange?" asked Carroll, with some impatience.

"It seems to me if I was in your position I should have little difficulty in raising \$600 in a case of emergency."

"Don't talk nonsense."

"I'm not talking nonsense. You're the confidential messenger for Henderson, aren't you?"

"I am."

"Very good. Among other duties I believe you told Sands that you carry the day's receipts of the store every morning to the bank?"

"Well, what if I do?"

"It is almost wholly in ready money, isn't it?"

"I believe it is."

"Don't you know that it is?"

"I do not."

"Why not?"

"Because the cashier puts the money, checks and bank-book in a small leathern bag which he locks and straps before handing to me."

"And then he hands you the key?"

"He does not. He keeps the key himself."

"And sends it to the bank by somebody else, I suppose," said Hall, with a slight sneer. "I thought you was a trusted employee."

"I am a trusted employee, but as the receipts of the store for one day even amount to many thousands of dollars, Mr. Henderson no doubt considers that some precaution is necessary."

"Oh, I see. But what is to prevent you and the person carrying the key coming together by prearrangement—I mean in case you two were that way inclined—and then——"

Carroll laughed.

"One very important thing prevents such an arrangement as you mention."

"What is it?" asked Seton Hall, curiously.

"The cashier doesn't send the key by another messenger."

"How does he send it, then?"

"He doesn't send it at all."

"No? Then how does the receiving teller get at the contents of the bag when you present it at the bank?"

"Easily."

"Perhaps you don't mind telling me."

"I haven't any objection. I should think your mind would already have grasped the solution to the problem. The bank has a duplicate key to the bag."

"Oh!" exclaimed Hall, feeling rather flat.

"By the way, Mr. Hall, I'd like to ask you a question."

"Ask it."

"What were you aiming at when you brought up the subject of the bag?"

"I was thinking that it afforded you an easy and convenient way of raising \$600 in an emergency like the one you're in."

"You mean by appropriating that amount from the funds of the store, eh? Thank you, I don't care to go to the State prison."

"Oh, there are more ways than one of killing a cat," chuckled Seton Hall.

"What do you mean by that?"

"What kind of looking bag does the cashier use in which to send the money by you to the bank?"

"A small leather one similar to that carried by bank messengers. I believe the bank furnished this bag originally."

"It seems to me it would be the simplest thing in the world to find a duplicate of that bag you carry to the bank."

"A duplicate?"

"Exactly. One that looks so like it that you couldn't tell them apart. It could be filled with cabbage leaves, or anything in fact that would correspond with the weight of the bag you carry yourself. Now, after you started for the bank with your bag, I could come along with the other bag and meet you. We'd be so glad to see each other that we'd drop our bags and shake hands. While we were talking a friend of mine steps up, changes the two bags, and tells me that a man around the corner is anxious to see me. We each grab the exchanged bag and walk away just as if nothing had happened. You go to the bank with the one containing the cabbage leaves, while I take the bag with the funds to a safe place and cut it open. The money is counted and divided into four parts. You get one part and this I O U into the bargain. I and my friend each get a quarter, and the fourth quarter goes to Sands. How does the scheme strike you?"

"It doesn't strike me at all."

"Why not?"

"Because I'd be sure to get the short end of the deal."

"How would you?"

"When the duplicate bag was opened at the bank, and the teller found only cabbage leaves or some other rot in it, what would happen to me?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing!"

"What could happen? You could swear that the cashier handed you the bag as usual and you carried it to the bank. That's all you know, and all you're expected to know. You couldn't have opened the bag en route and changed the contents because you didn't have the key. You could swear that you never let go of the bag from the time the cashier handed it to you locked and strapped until you presented it to the receiving teller. You see there wouldn't be a bit of evidence against you."

"Henderson would put a smart detective on the case and he might find the necessary evidence."

"The best detective in the world couldn't find a thing against you."

"Well, I'd be fired for carelessness. That's the least that could happen to me," said Carroll.

"What need you care? Your share of the spoil would amount to a good sum, I should imagine, if the job was pulled off on a Tuesday after the bargain day sales of the day before. You could afford to get discharged for that amount of ready money, couldn't you?"

"I might, if the job was thoroughly safe," replied Carroll, who was interested in the scheme in spite of any qualms of conscience.

"Well, if you're willing to stand in with me I'll put the thing through as slick as a greased whistle. It's an easy way for you to settle that I O U and secure a good haul of money besides."

Homier Carroll, however, hemmed and hawed, and seemed skittish about embarking in the ticklish enterprise.

Finally Seton Hall grew impatient.

"Do you know of any better way by which you can settle this I O U?" he asked.

Carroll confessed that he did not.

"Well, it's got to be settled, if Sands has to communicate with Mr. Henderson. I've suggested how you can get out of your hole with money to boot. It's up to you."

Driven into a bad corner Carroll consented to stand in with Hall.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT JOE OVERHEARD AT THE BACK OF THE WOODSHED.

On the following Sunday afternoon Seton Hall called again on Bentley Morse.

He had a new suit on, with hat and shoes complete, and he looked like a dude compared with his appearance the week before.

Joe was out in the back yard near the woodshed when Hall made his appearance and he marveled much at his improved looks.

"He must have struck luck somewhere," thought the boy. "He's too late for dinner to-day, and I don't want to stay to supper."

Hall entered the house and Joe saw nothing more of him for half an hour.

Joe was sitting against the back of the woodshed reading an interesting book when he heard voices.

The voices belonged to Hall and Mr. Morse, who had entered the woodshed.

There was a knothole close to Joe's head and he heard Hall say:

"I suppose there is no danger of anybody overhearing us here, Morse?"

"Not the least," replied Mr. Morse. "Nobody comes here on Sunday except Joe to get an armful of wood for the kitchen in the morning."

"Where is your stepson now?"

"I couldn't tell you. He generally goes down to the river on Sunday afternoon, so I s'pose he's there now."

"Well, as long as he's not around here it's all right."

"What have you got to tell me that you're so particular about?"

"You remember I told you last Sunday that I had something in the money-making line in view?" said Hall.

"Yes, and you said you'd try and let me in on it if you could manage to do so."

"That's right. Well, since then the matter has rounded out and I find that I can offer you the chance to make \$500 for a few hours' work."

"Five hundred dollars for a few hours' work!" ejaculated Mr. Morse, hardly believing his ears.

Joe was almost as much interested in such a remarkable proposition as was his stepfather, and he stuck his ear close to the knothole in order to learn if possible the details of what seemed to be a regular snap.

"Precisely—\$500," replied Seton Hall.

"What will I have to do to earn that amount?" asked Mr. Morse.

"Nothing of any great importance."

"Will I really get \$500?" asked Joe's stepfather eagerly.

"Undoubtedly."

"Tell me all about it, then. That sum of money would be a god-send to me. It would raise me a thousand per cent. in the estimation of Mrs. Morse. I have a hard job raising a quarter a day from her to spend on myself, and a quarter doesn't go very far."

"Not very far," chuckled Hall. "Five hundred dollars would put you on your feet."

"I should say it would. I need new clothes, and shoes, and a hat; in fact a whole lot of things which I can't get at present. I should like to walk into the house some day looking like a gentleman, with a wad in my pocket, and surprise Mrs. Morse, and that young cub of hers," said Mr. Morse unctuously.

"Meaning your stepson?"

"Of course—who else?"

"Well, Bentley, am I to take it for granted that you're not over particular concerning the character of the job in view if there is money in it?" asked Seton Hall, insinuatingly.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that this job is a little out of the regular run—something of a special and confidential nature—otherwise common sense would tell you that nobody would pay so large a sum of money for so little actual work."

"Do you mean to say it's crooked? If it is, I don't know that I could afford to go into it. It would ruin me if I was sent to prison."

"I'll admit that it isn't as straight as a die, but it's perfectly safe, or I shouldn't go into it myself. There isn't the slightest danger of either of us going to prison for it."

"Let me hear what it is," said Mr. Morse, to whom the promised \$500 was a great temptation.

He was not really overburdened with conscientious scruples, but he had a great respect for the law.

He would not hesitate to engage in some things that were not strictly regular provided he had a reasonable assurance of immunity from the consequences connected therewith.

"I will tell you if you will promise me that I can depend on you," said Hall.

"I promise."

"All right. A friend of mine, named Howard Sands, is engineering this enterprise," proceeded Hall.

Joe, listening at the knothole, started on hearing Hall say that Howard Sands, the confederate of the notorious shoplifter, Nance Goodwin, was a friend of his.

Sands had been shown up in the magistrate's court as a gambler and suspected crook, and it did not speak well for Seton Hall to be on friendly terms with such a person.

The little that Joe had so far overheard impressed him with the idea that Hall was trying to inveigle Mr. Morse into some disreputable enterprise, and the boy felt that it was his duty to learn as much as he could about it so as to save his stepfather from getting himself into serious trouble.

"Sands, owing to the position in which he happens to be placed, is unable to take an active part in the job, which requires the services of two persons, and therefore he left it to me to select an assistant to help me out," went on Hall.

Mr. Morse nodded and waited for further particulars.

"There's a good haul in the monetary line to be made on Tuesday morning," said Hall, watching Mr. Morse narrowly to see how he would take the suggestion.

"A good haul," answered Joe's stepfather slowly and doubtfully. "Do you mean to say that you want me to help you steal——"

"That's a very vulgar word, Mr. Morse," interrupted Hall glibly. "Just listen to me and I think you'll agree that the affair is rather different from a common theft."

"Go on," said Mr. Morse, not feeling quite easy in his mind about Hall's proposition.

"The matter is just this: Every business morning a young man, named Homer Carroll, carries the previous day's receipts of Henderson's department store to the Tradesmen's Bank. Are you following me?" said Hall.

"Yes," answered Mr. Morse.

"Good gracious!" breathed Joe at the knothole. "Is this a scheme to hold up Carroll and rob him on the street?"

"He carries the money in a leather bag, locked and strapped," went on Hal. "Now, Howard Sands has a strong hold on Carroll, so strong, in fact, that Carroll has consented to be a party to our little game. That fact makes the enterprise absolutely safe and sure. I have secured a leather bag that is a perfect facsimile of the one carried by Carroll. I have filled it with a few cheap books and newspapers so that its weight corresponds with Carroll's bag when it contains its valuable load of money and other items. On Tuesday morning I am to meet Carroll in front of the

doorway of the Anchor Building, now undergoing repairs, on Elm Street a little below Washington. I wish you to be at the Anchor Building a few minutes before Carroll makes his appearance. I will have my bag and Henderson's messenger will have his. According to prearrangement both of us will drop our bags and shake hands. That will be your cue. You step forward, change the position of the two bags, then tap me on the arm and say that a man by the name of Johnson wishes to see me around the corner in Dock Square. That's all you have to do to earn the \$500. I will attend to the rest. What do you say? Are you in on it?"

"Suppose somebody sees me change the bags?" said Mr. Morse apprehensively.

"You must do it in an off-hand way, as if it was a joke, and then walk around to the square, where I'll meet you. We'll go around to Sands's room, and after he has examined the bag to see that you've made no mistake he'll hand you the \$500 and then you are through, and may go where you choose. Am I not offering you a regular snap? Why, man, if you were not an old chum of mine, and I know that you need money badly, I wouldn't think of making you this offer. Talk about easy money, Bentley, why it's just like finding it."

"You are sure that the messenger is in with you?" said Mr. Morse anxiously. "He is sure to notice me change the bags."

"He's in all right. We're going to whack up with him."

"But he'll be arrested when he reaches the bank with the wrong bag, won't he? Then he would give us away to try and save himself."

"He'll not be arrested, don't you fear. He doesn't carry the key of the bag, so that it is utterly impossible for him to open it and monkey with the contents. That will remove suspicion from him."

"But the people at the bank will be sure to know that the bag was changed on the way from the store."

"How can they tell that? The bags are exactly alike. Carroll and I have attended to that during the week. In fact Carroll has been carrying the new bag since Thursday as a test. Neither Henderson's cashier nor the receiving teller at the bank has noticed any difference. He will carry the new bag with the money in it on Tuesday morning, and after you have made the exchange he will actually deliver the original bag at the bank. Carroll will be prepared to swear that the bag never left his hand en route. That will throw the matter up to the cashier of Henderson's. He will be equally liable to suspicion. What is to prevent the impression from gaining ground that he is the guilty man himself? Carroll will leave a part of the newspapers I have put in the bag in the cashier's waste paper basket on Tuesday morning, and when Henderson calls in a detective to investigate the matter the messenger will manage to convey a hint to him so that he will look into the basket, where he will find the tell-tale evidence. Then it will be up to the cashier to explain how the paper got there. You see everything has been thought of and arranged so as to throw suspicion in the wrong quarter and away from Carroll. As for you and I we won't figure in the affair at all. How can we? Nobody but Carroll and Sands will know that we've had anything to do with it."

Seton Hall's specious reasoning had so great an effect on

Mr. Morse that he consented to take part in the enterprise, much to his friend's satisfaction.

A number of unimportant particulars were gone over by Hall, and the scheme finally arranged in all its details.

Mr. Morse promised faithfully to meet Seton Hall at a certain hour in Dock Square on Tuesday morning, and then the two men left the woodshed and walked off up the street, leaving Joe Sturgess alone to digest the particulars of the well-laid project which he had overheard.

"Well, if that thing doesn't beat the Dutch for downright rascality I'm no judge of a piece of crooked work," mused the boy. "Of course it's up to me to prevent the job going through, and I shall do it; but how will I set to work? I'm afraid that it won't do to tell Mr. Morse that I'm on to the scheme, for he'd be sure to inform Hall, and Hall would put Carroll wise in his turn. Carroll has a whole lot of influence with Mr. Henderson, and he'd use it to get me discharged out of revenge, and if that particular scheme was abandoned I couldn't show him up as a faithless employee, for there would be no evidence against him. I'll have to tell my story to Mr. Henderson himself, and let him act as he thinks best, requesting him, as a special favor, not to push matters against my stepfather."

Having decided on his course of action Joe left the rear of the shed and walked into the house.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH JOE DISCLOSES THE PLOT TO THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE.

On Monday morning Joe was in the counting-room when the cashier handed Homer Carroll the leather bag to take to the bank as usual.

He wondered if that was to be the last real trip he would ever make in the employ of Mr. Henderson.

Joe intended to have his interview with the proprietor just as soon as the gentleman made his appearance, which he usually did about eleven o'clock.

It happened that Joe was out on an errand when Mr. Henderson arrived at the store, and as the proprietor was very busy thereafter, while Joe was very busy, too, the boy had no opportunity to talk to the boss until he was preparing to go home.

Then Joe seized the chance to enter his private office.

"What is it, Sturgess?" asked Mr. Henderson in a friendly tone, for since Joe's capture of the queen of the shoplifters the boy stood high in the estimation of the proprietor, as, in fact, he did with the superintendent and other leading employees.

"I wish to see you on a matter of importance," replied Joe respectfully.

"Indeed," answered Mr. Henderson in some surprise. "What is it?"

Joe felt a trifle embarrassed about the revelation he was about to make, particularly as his stepfather was implicated in the matter.

"I've got something to tell you that is sure to surprise you."

Mr. Henderson looked more astonished than ever.

"In fact, sir, I am afraid you may doubt my word, but I assure you that it is true, every word of it," went on the boy earnestly.

Mr. Henderson read truthfulness and conviction in the boy's face, as well as in the tones of his voice.

"Proceed, my boy," he said kindly, "I have perfect confidence in your veracity."

"Every morning, except Sundays and legal holidays, you send a large sum of money to the Trademen's Bank for deposit by Homer Carroll," began Joe.

As this was strictly an office secret the proprietor of the store was both astonished and disturbed to find that his office boy was aware of the nature of Carroll's morning errand.

"How came you to learn that fact, Sturgess?" he asked a bit sharply.

"I overheard two men yesterday afternoon talking about it."

"Two men! Are they connected with the store?"

"No, sir."

"They were strangers to you, then?"

"Hardly, sir. One of them is a man named Seton Hall, once a clerk in the Boylston Bank; the other is—my stepfather."

"Indeed. What was the nature of their conversation?"

"Seton Hall called at our house yesterday afternoon and persuaded my stepfather to assist him in a scheme to get possession of that bag. He assured my stepfather that Homer Carroll was a party to the plot, and that the project was bound to succeed without the least trouble or danger to any one concerned."

To say that Mr. Henderson was amazed at this revelation on the part of his office boy would be stating the thing mildly.

As a matter of fact he was positively thunderstruck.

He looked at Joe for some minutes without speaking.

Then he took off his hat, laid it on the top of his closed desk and seated himself in his pivot chair.

"Sit down, Sturgess," he said, pointing to the chair beside his desk. "Now tell me, as near as you can remember, what you overheard and how you came to be in a position to do so."

Joe began at the beginning, by saying that he was sitting at the back of the woodshed in his yard reading when Seton Hall and Mr. Morse, his stepfather, entered the shed.

He described how Hall had gradually led up to the subject in hand, and then he repeated the words of Hall, as well as he could recall them.

Mr. Henderson gave him the closest attention, and did not interrupt him once.

He saw, as far as any man could see, that his office boy was telling the truth.

After Joe had finished his story the proprietor questioned him closely on several points, chiefly those referring to Homer Carroll, but the boy's replies only confirmed the facts as he had stated them.

"This is a very serious matter, Sturgess. Kindly ask Mr. Harker to stop in here," said Mr. Henderson.

Joe obeyed orders and returned with the superintendent.

The proprietor briefly explained to his astonished manager the plot to get away with that day's receipts on its way to the bank on the following morning, and asked Joe to repeat his story, which the boy did without the slightest variation from his original statement.

"I see no reason to doubt the truth of Sturgess's story,"

said Mr. Henderson. "We must take means to catch the guilty ones in the act. If Homer Carroll is really a party to this piece of rascality the fact can be easily proved by having him followed and a sharp watch kept on his actions. The scheme is certainly a clever one, and had it not been overheard and reported to us by this boy the chances were all in favor of it going through successfully. Whether a sharp sleuth would afterward be successful in running the schemers down is another matter altogether. I shall leave this affair in your hands, Mr. Harker. Use your own judgment, but do not take any chances with the money."

"Very well, sir. I will make it my business to get at the bottom of the plot. By the way, Joe," turning to the boy, "I think you said that the substitute bag is now being used by the cashier unknowingly for the original."

"That is what Seton Hall told my stepfather," answered Joe.

"In which case the original bag is in possession of the rascals. I will have Mr. Brown, the cashier, bring the bag in here now, examine it thoroughly in our presence to see if he can detect whether it is the original or a substitute."

"Do so," said Mr. Henderson.

The superintendent went into the counting-room and in a few minutes returned with the cashier and the leather bag.

"Mr. Brown," said Harker, "will you please examine that bag with great care and tell us whether that is the same bag that you have always been using to send our money to the bank."

The cashier looked surprised, but proceeded to obey instructions.

"It must be the same bag unless the bank has returned us a duplicate," he said as he began looking it over.

Finally he announced that it was not the original bag.

"How do you know it is not?" asked the superintendent.

"By a mark, a small star, that was on the bottom of the original. It does not appear on this bag."

"Perhaps it might have been rubbed out."

"I do not believe that it could be removed without some evidence remaining of that fact."

"Then in your opinion this is not the same bag that we originally got from the bank?"

"It is not the same bag."

"And the two bags are so much alike that you never noticed before that a change had been made in them?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. That is all. Please do not mention this matter to any one, Mr. Brown. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"You may go," said the superintendent. "Well, Mr. Henderson," he added as soon as the door had closed on the cashier, "Mr. Brown seems to have confirmed one item at least of Sturgess's story."

"It would appear so," nodded the proprietor.

"The next thing in order will be to communicate with the bank. With your permission I will use your desk telephone."

The desk was opened and the superintendent called up the girl at the store switchboard and asked her to call up the Tradesmen's Bank and connect the private office with the wire.

In a few minutes the superintendent was in communication with the bank.

He asked the cashier if the bag originally sent to the store to carry its funds in had ever been changed at the bank.

"Hold the wire and I will try and find out," replied the bank cashier.

In less than five minutes he replied that the bag had never been changed by the bank.

"Are you positive of that fact?" asked Harker.

"I have the assurance of the receiving teller, and he is the only man who handles your bag."

"Thank you, that is all," replied the superintendent, ringing off. "Well, Mr. Henderson, we now have an added confirmation of this boy's story. I think we need no longer doubt that the plot is a real one, and that Homer Carroll is implicated in it. The bag could not very well have been changed without his knowledge and connivance."

"I agree with you. It is certainly a tremendous surprise to me to find that a young man of excellent family, who seems to have heretofore given us every reason to believe him above suspicion, should at last yield to temptation that can only end in his disgrace, if not ultimate ruin. It grieves me, Mr. Harker, more than I can say. I have always regarded him as the brightest and smartest employee in my service. Really it shakes one's confidence in human nature. A man running any large business like this store is compelled to rely to a considerable extent on the faithfulness of his people. It is a sad thing when even one of them abuses the trust reposed in his honor."

"It is, indeed, sir," replied the superintendent; "but the newspapers are continually reporting instances of men who have gone wrong and foolishly killed all their chances in life. I'm afraid that as long as the world wags these unfortunate things will happen. There must be a fatality attaching to some people, for it is a true saying that 'he whom the gods would destroy they first make mad,' and surely a young man with such talents and prospects as Homer Carroll has must be made to sacrifice them on the altar of money-lust."

"Well, make your arrangements, Mr. Harker, for catching these conspirators in such a way that there can be no question as to their guilt," said Mr. Henderson, rising and putting on his hat. "As for you, Sturgess, I thank you for the interest you show in the welfare of this establishment, and I assure you that your future will be well taken care of. I have never yet failed to recognize faithfulness and merit in my employees."

"Thank you, sir. I did what I considered to be my duty. Now I hope you will for my mother's sake at least be lenient with Mr. Morse. If he is arrested and prosecuted for this matter it will bring trouble on her and disgrace on us both. I have done my duty to you, sir, without reserve. Please think of my mother."

There were tears in Joe's eyes and an earnest appeal in his voice that went straight to the hearts of both Mr. Henderson and his superintendent.

"My boy," said the proprietor, "I promise you that he shall not be prosecuted. See to it, Mr. Harker, that he is not arrested with the other two. If they implicate him in court try and square the matter with the detectives. You understand what I mean."

"Yes, sir," replied the superintendent.

"If absolutely necessary arrange to have Mr. Morse sent

out of town till the matter blows over. Spare no expense to save him from the consequences of his foolishness. We must do this at all costs in justice to Sturgess and for his mother."

"Thank you, Mr. Henderson," said Joe gratefully.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW MESSRS. SANDS AND HALL ARE BROUGHT UP WITH A ROUND TURN.

Long before the cashier called Homer Carroll to his desk to fake the bag as usual to the bank Mr. Harker, the superintendent, had made his arrangements for protecting the money in transit and for the arrest of the two principals in the conspiracy.

He had two lynx-eyed men in his office for an hour who were given a chance to size up Carroll.

The duty of one was to proceed to the Anchor Building and lie in wait for the meeting between Carroll and Hall to take place as arranged; the business of the other was to shadow the messenger to the rendezvous and assist his brother detectives in making the arrest.

They were instructed to pay no attention to the man who changed the bags, but to make a note of his face and person for future use if necessary.

The superintendent himself intended to be at the scene of the rascality so as to be able to swear against the guilty ones.

At length Carroll was handed the bag containing the previous day's receipts and he started for the bank.

One of the sleuths was already on the ground, and the other followed Carroll.

Mr. Harker also started for the Anchor Building.

As Carroll had no reason to suspect that his duplicity was known and the scheme on the eve of a collapse, he walked along in his usually confident way.

In due time he reached Elm Street and walked down to the Anchor Building.

Coming toward him he saw Seton Hall, bag in hand.

"How d'ye do, old man?" said Hall, dropping his bag and putting out his hand according to the prearranged programme.

Carroll dropped his bag and shook hands with Hall, and both turning half away from the bags began to talk.

Mr. Morse at this point issued from the door of the Anchor Building, and after a cautious glance around approached them.

He seized the two bags and changed them in a rather clumsy way, and then tapped Hall on the shoulder.

"Say, Mr. Hall, a party by the name of Johnson wants to see you down in Dock Square," he said.

"That so, Bentley? Well, you go down there and tell him I'll be there right away," replied Hall.

Thereupon Joe's stepfather ambled off down Elm Street, glad that he had satisfactorily earned the \$500 that he fondly expected to handle soon.

A moment later Hall and Carroll shook hands again, each grabbed his changed bag and started in different directions.

One of the detectives followed Hall down Elm Street, with Superintendent Harker close behind, while the other shadowed Carroll to the bank.

The original arrangements included the arrest of the two men in front of the Anchor Building.

This was changed at the request of the chief detective, who wished to capture Howard Sands, who, from Joe's story, appeared to be the originator of the crooked game.

Mr. Morse was waiting for Hall in Dock Square.

When the men came together they started over toward Faneuil Hall Square, thence through to North Market, past the Quincy Market and around the corner into Commercial Street, which they followed to Atlantic Ave., and entered the South Ferry Building.

Here they took a boat for East Boston, landing near the foot of Lewis Street, which they followed into Summer, and along the latter thoroughfare into Liverpool Street, where they entered a three-story building.

The detective and Superintendent Harker kept right behind them all this time, the former following them upstairs to the top floor, where he saw them enter a room.

A minute later the officer was joined by the superintendent.

Removing his shoes he asked Harker, who was something of an athlete, to boost him up to the fanlight.

The officer, much to his satisfaction, found that the fanlight was not secured on the inside and he cautiously opened it about an inch.

Hall and Mr. Morse were standing beside a small table at which Howard Sands was seated in the act of opening the leather bag with a key that fitted the lock.

A bank-book, stuffed with checks, was taken out of the bag, and then one bundle of money labeled \$500.

"Here's the reward for your services, Mr. Morse," said Sands, tossing the bundle to him. "You never earned money easier in your life, eh?"

"That's right," replied Joe's stepfather. "If you have any more jobs like this one I'm on if you can use me."

"Then your conscience doesn't worry you a particle, does it?" laughed Sands.

"Not a bit. I believe that people who have a lot of money ought to be made to divide it with those who are hard up," replied Morse. "Then everybody would be happy and things wouldn't be like they are now—a few having all the coin and living on the fat of the land, while the majority are hustling around to get half enough to eat. It's an outrage, and any scheme tending to make the rich shell out meets with my approval every time. Thanks for the \$500. It will come in mighty handy for me. I'll be able to live like a gentleman for a while. Good-day, gentlemen. You always know where to find me, Hall, in case you should need my valuable services again."

While he was speaking the detective descended from his perch, and after telling Harker to hide in the corridor he slipped down to the landing below where he lay in wait for Mr. Morse.

In a few minutes Mr. Morse, feeling like a fighting cock, and mentally congratulating himself on the possession of \$500, which was a fortune to him, descended the stairs.

As he turned toward the lower flight the detective confronted him.

"Mr. Bentley Morse, I believe," said the officer, grimly.

Joe's stepfather stopped, utterly confounded by being addressed by his own name by a stranger way over in East Boston.

Then he regarded the detective with not a little anxiety.

"Your name is Morse, I think?" repeated the officer, this time sharply.

"Y-e-s," fluttered the owner of that name nervously.

"You have just received a bundle of bills amounting to \$500 in return for services rendered. Hand it over, please."

"Do you mean to rob me?" gasped Mr. Morse, in a tone of consternation.

"Not at all, Mr. Morse. I simply wish to take charge of it in the interest of Mr. William Henderson, whose property it is."

"Oh, lor'!" gurgled Mr. Morse, who was a coward at heart, and immediately jumped to the conclusion that he had been pinched by the police. "Are you a—a——"

"Detective?" chuckled the officer, much amused at the man's evident fright. "Yes, you've hit it at the first guess," and he threw open the flap of his coat, displaying his badge.

"I'm done fôr," groaned Morse, grasping the railing for support. "I knew something would happen. Don't handcuff me, Mr. Officer. I'll go quietly."

"The money, please!" replied the detective curtly.

"Here it is. I haven't touched it. I never thought I'd have to go to jail. I wish I'd never listened to my friend Hall. He has ruined me.

The officer glanced at the package of money and put it into his pocket.

"Now, Mr. Morse, you can go," he said.

"Go! I thought——"

"Go home and keep quiet, do you understand? You've been caught with the goods, but my instructions are not to arrest you. Now go and thank your stars that you've got off so easily. If you got what's coming to you as accessory in this case you'd go up for five years at least. Now, then, just make yourself scarce."

The detective pushed the dazed man toward the lower stairs and returned to the landing above.

Once more he mounted on the superintendent's shoulders and glanced into the room.

The contents of the leather bag had been dumped on the table and Howard Sands was counting the packages of bills and loose money, while Seton Hall was keeping tab on the amount.

"There, now, how much does it foot up?" asked Sands, in a tone of satisfaction.

"Twenty-eight thousand, three hundred and sixty-two dollars and forty cents," answered Hall, complacently. "It's a fine haul. How much do I get? Remember I've done the real work and taken all the risk."

"I think we agreed on \$5,000," replied Sands, suavely.

"Couldn't you raise it three more, Sands? I think I'm entitled to that much."

"A bargain is a bargain, Hall," returned the gambler. "There's your money," and he pushed a pile of bills toward his companion. "Tell young Carroll to meet me in the Pilgrim Rock Cafe at eight to-night and I will pay him his share."

"All right," replied Hall, looking longingly at the pile of money which still remained on the table. "You're making a good thing out of this job, Sands, and you haven't taken any chances at all."

"It's the part of wisdom to be on the safe side," chuckled

Sands. "You see, I need the coin badly. Nance is held on \$5,000 bail, and I promised to get her out. I'll never see that five thou. again."

"Why won't you? You'll get it back when she appears for trial."

"She won't appear, for she's sure to be convicted. They've got her dead this time. As soon as she's out on bail she'll skip for parts unknown."

"And so will you, I suppose?"

"Of course. Where Nance goes I go. The city will make \$6,000 out of us, while the State will be saved the cost of keeping Nance for a number of years, and maybe myself, too."

"Well, I guess I'll go. This \$5,000 will keep me in clover for awhile. I hope to see you again before you quit the town for good."

"You'll find me at the Pilgrim Rock for the rest of the week, at any rate," said Sands, rising from his chair. "I'll let you out."

The detective dropped to the floor and whispered something hurriedly into the superintendent's ear.

Both drew revolvers and stood at the door.

As the key was heard to turn in the lock the detective and Harker pushed the door in and rushed into the room, upsetting both Hall and Sands.

"You're pinched, both of you!" cried the officer in a loud voice. "Throw up your hands!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONSPIRATORS GET WHAT IS COMING TO THEM.

The two rascals were paralyzed by the suddenness of their capture.

It was as if a thunderbolt from a clear sky had laid them out without the slightest warning.

They sat up and gazed at the detective and Superintendent Harker in the greatest consternation.

The officer stepped forward and with professional quickness handcuffed them together.

Then he thrust his hand into Hall's pocket and took out the package of \$5,000, which he tossed on the table, following it with the \$500 he had relieved Mr. Morse of.

By that time Sands had recovered his sang froid.

"What do you mean by breaking into a man's office in this way?" he demanded in a tone of assumed indignation.

"Cut it out, Sands," replied the detective curtly. "You and your friend are nailed with the goods. Better close up, for anything you may say will be used against you. Henderson's messenger is in jail by this time, and you will soon be keeping him company. We've got a clear case against the three of you."

"I'd like to know what you charge us with?" sneered Sands.

"You know without me telling you. There's the evidence on that table. It is substantial enough to send you all to the State prison without the jury leaving the box. You'll find it a pretty serious case of grand-larceny."

While the detective was talking Harker was stowing the money back in the bag.

The key was in the lock, so he locked and strapped it.

Five minutes later the detective, superintendent and their prisoners were on their way to the ferry landing.

In due time they arrived at the central office, where Hall and Sands were charged with grand larceny and locked up.

The superintendent learned that Homer Carroll was also under lock and key, having been arrested at the bank as soon as the bag was opened and found to contain only a collection of paper-covered books and old newspapers.

He had put up a big protest and sent word to Mr. Henderson to come to his relief.

No attention, however, was paid to his appeal.

Then he sent word to his father, who was general manager of an insurance agency.

Mr. Carroll responded at once, greatly troubled over his only son's predicament.

Homer posed as a much injured person, so his father lost no time in calling on Mr. Henderson.

The merchant received Mr. Carroll, told him the story of his son's faithlessness, and assured him that the evidence against the young man was conclusive and could not but result in his conviction.

Mr. Carroll would not believe that his boy was guilty, so he hired a first-class lawyer to protect his interests.

When the superintendent got back to the store he called Joe into his office and told him how the scheme had been permitted to go through and the rascals, with the exception of his stepfather, arrested afterward.

"If you find Mr. Morse at home to-night, Joe, tell him to leave the city for a month at least. Here is \$100 to cover his expenses."

"Thank you, sir," replied Joe.

When Joe reached home there was no sign of his stepfather about the house.

"Where is Mr. Morse, mother?" he asked.

"He's left town for a short time," replied his mother, who did not seem to be greatly concerned over her husband's hasty departure.

"Left home, did he?"

"Yes. He came in about two o'clock and told me a man had offered him work in the country. He said he had accepted the job and was going away at once. He asked me for \$5 to pay his fare, but I could only let him have \$2. He took it, packed his valise and left in a great hurry to catch a train, he said. The whole thing took me so by surprise that I haven't recovered from it yet. It's the first time in three years that Mr. Morse ever showed any disposition to work. It must be something astonishingly easy to strike his fancy. At any rate it's a great relief to me to have him doing something, even if you and I get no benefit from it."

Joe did not think it best to undeceive his mother, for he knew that it would grieve her greatly to learn that her husband had been implicated in a criminal act.

Mr. Morse had evidently taken time by the forelock in his anxiety to elude the police.

The fact that the detective who had taken the money from him in East Boston did not arrest him failed to impress him with a sense of immunity from the consequences of his connection with the leather bag affair.

He judged that the police would be after him as soon as the full facts of the case came to light, so he decided that the best thing he could do was to leave town.

He got as far as Salem, where he got acquainted with a section foreman on the Eastern Railroad.

He was offered a job as section hand on the road, and

as he had to work in order to live he accepted the opening, and was soon earning an honest living for the first time in years.

Thus his one guilty act turned out to be a kind of blessing, for it relieved Joe and his mother of a burden on their slender resources, and made a lazy loafer get down to hard work and be of some use in the world.

The story of the crime was in all the afternoon papers, but Mr. Morse's name did not appear in print.

In fact there was no mention of a fourth man in the case.

At the examination of the prisoners next morning before a magistrate the charge was pushed by the superintendent of the store.

He stated that information of the scheme had been conveyed to Mr. Henderson by a person whose name must remain unknown for good and sufficient reasons, and that measures were at once taken to frustrate the robbery and capture the guilty ones.

He told how he and one of the detectives had followed the messenger to the Anchor Building; described what took place in front of that building, and then went on to tell how, after the exchange of leather bags had been effected, he and the detective had followed Hall and his confederate to the building in Liverpool Street, East Boston, where Hall and Sands were arrested with the bag and the money in their possession.

The detective who had made the arrest in Liverpool Street corroborated Harker's story.

"What about this confederate who changed the bags, and whom you and Mr. Harker followed to the Liverpool Street house?" asked the magistrate.

"He got away somehow," replied the detective.

"Well, I'll issue a warrant for his arrest. I suppose you have no idea of his identity?"

"Not the slightest," replied the detective unblushingly, fingering the \$100 bill in his pocket which was the cause of his apparent ignorance.

"Make out a warrant in the name of John Doe," said the magistrate to his clerk.

The warrant was duly made out, signed by the magistrate and handed to the detective to execute.

The magistrate might have saved himself the trouble, as the officer had not the slightest intention of hunting for Mr. Morse, and he wouldn't have found him if he had.

The lawyer retained to defend Homer Carroll made a big fight to have his client discharged on the ground that there wasn't evidence enough against the young man to warrant his being held for trial.

The magistrate disagreed with the lawyer and Carroll had to go back to jail.

Before the case came before one of the criminal courts Nance Goodwin and Sands were brought to trial for the shoplifting affair.

They were easily convicted.

The woman got five years, and Sands one year.

In due time an indictment was found against Sands, Hall and Carroll, and the two latter were tried, convicted and sentenced to six years in State prison.

The indictment against Sands was held over till the gambler served his year's sentence, when he was at once rearrested, tried, convicted and sent up for ten years.

An indictment was found against Mr. Morse, under the name of John Doe, but it was pigeon-holed in the district attorney's office, and nothing ever came of it.

In the meantime, on the afternoon of the day that Sands, Hall and Carroll were examined before the magistrate, Mr. Henderson called Joe into his private office and, after thanking him again for the service he had rendered the establishment, presented him with \$1,000 as a substantial evidence of his appreciation of the boy's conduct in the affair.

Joe thanked him and said that he would endeavor to prove worthy of his employer's good opinion.

Next morning the superintendent called him into his office and told him that his wages was raised to \$10 a week.

"Ten dollars!" exclaimed Joe, to whom such a sum seemed munificent.

"Ten dollars," repeated Mr. Harker. "You see, you are to assume a more responsible duty in connection with your other work. Hereafter you will carry the day's receipts to the bank in Homer Carroll's place. Mr. Henderson considers you one of the most trustworthy of his employees and well adapted for that job."

Joe was overjoyed at this further evidence of his employer's appreciation, and told Mr. Harker that he would try and fill the bill right up to the handle.

Since Henderson's method of sending the money to the Tradesmen's Bank by a messenger on foot had been advertised in the newspapers, it was not deemed prudent to continue the plan any longer.

Accordingly, as soon as Mr. Henderson reached the store in the morning his automobile was placed at Joe's service for the trip to the bank.

Any morning that Mr. Henderson did not come down town a cab was hired for the same purpose, and the boy was provided with a small revolver as an additional protection.

His higher wages, together with the absence of Mr. Morse, enabled Joe and his mother to live much better than they had heretofore been accustomed to.

The little woman was no longer obliged to hustle hard to make ends meet, and it was a great relief to her not to have a worthless man hanging around the house, worrying her for the price of an occasional drink, which was the most she had been able to provide him with.

Of course she could not tell at what moment he might turn up again, but she felt that she was now better able to stand the strain of his presence than before.

When she mentioned this doubt to Joe he would grin and beg her not to worry about the matter.

"I have reason to believe that he won't be back in a hurry, mother," he assured her.

Mrs. Morse did not press her son to explain himself, but hoped that his view of the situation would prove true, which, as a matter of fact, it did.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH JOE PROVES HIMSELF A HERO.

Several months passed during which Joe Sturgess was advanced from office boy to general office assistant.

One day a very charming little girl of perhaps fifteen came into the office and asked for Mr. Henderson.

Joe had seen her once before and knew she was the big merchant's niece, whom he had adopted on the sudden death of both her parents some years before.

As Mr. Henderson had no children it was generally believed that his niece, whose name was Elsie Grant, would become his heiress.

Joe was just coming out of the superintendent's office when the girl entered the outer room, and it was to him she put her query.

"No, Miss Grant," he answered, "Mr. Henderson went to a business meeting of a manufacturing establishment and I could not tell you when he'll return."

"It's too bad," she pouted, "I wanted to see him before he gets home."

Joe bowed politely, but could not suggest anything to relieve her evident impatience.

"Are you Joseph Sturgess?" she said suddenly, looking at the boy curiously.

"Yes, miss; that's my name."

"You're a smart boy, aren't you?"

Joe blushed and looked embarrassed.

"Uncle William says you're the smartest and brightest boy he ever had."

"I'm much obliged to him for saying so," returned Joe, not feeling quite at ease.

"Well, you look smart, and bright, and—handsome, too," she said with perfect frankness, looking him in the face.

Joe blushed again, and looked away from her.

"You're the boy who caught that woman shoplifter, aren't you?"

Joe confessed that he was the identical boy.

"Then you were smarter than all the store detectives."

"No, miss, I guess not," replied Joe, modestly. "I just happened to be looking at her when she took the bolt of silk."

"You must have sharp eyes, for uncle said she was so clever at her business that she could steal lots of things right under the eyes of the store detectives when they were watching her and escape detection."

"Probably I wouldn't have caught her if she had taken a small article; but a bolt of silk is of some size, and she couldn't get away with it as quick as she might lots of other things."

"That's true," admitted Miss Grant; "but you were entitled to the credit of capturing her just the same."

"Your uncle complimented me at the time and made me a present."

"That isn't the only thing you've done. You saved uncle many thousand dollars when his messenger conspired with some other men to steal the bag that he carried to the bank every day. You found out all about the plot beforehand and told my uncle in time to defeat the plan and have the men caught. They've just been sent to prison."

"It just happened to be my luck to overhear two of the persons talking the matter over, and of course I considered it my duty to inform Mr. Henderson."

"You're carrying the bag to the bank yourself now. I believe?"

"Yes, miss."

"Uncle intends to promote you as fast as you are capable of doing better work."

"He is very kind to keep me in mind."

"He believes in encouraging his employees and doing them justice; but I know he regards you with special favor."

"Well, I try to do the best I can all the time."

"I'm sure you do, for uncle says so. Wouldn't you like to call at our house and see me some evening? I should be glad to have you come."

"I'm much obliged to you for inviting me, Miss Grant, but I'm afraid Mr. Henderson won't care for me to do so."

"Why not?" she exclaimed, opening her pretty eyes.

"Well, it wouldn't be just the thing, I'm afraid, for an employee of the store to pay a visit at the boss's home. He'd think I had a big nerve."

"Why should he when I have invited you?"

"He might think that you ought not to have invited me."

"He never objects to anybody that I invite, and I am sure he wouldn't object to you, anyway."

"I'd like to come, for you are very good to invite an ordinary store boy like me, but——"

"You are not an ordinary store boy, Mr. Sturgess. You are far from that. You are not only a smart boy, but one of the most gentlemanly boys I have ever met."

"Thank you for saying so, Miss Grant. I hope you're not trying to spoil me."

"I am sure I couldn't do that. You are not one of those kind of boys."

"You seem to have a very good opinion of me," he said laughingly.

"I have," she answered with emphasis. "Now promise me you will call."

"If you insist I will."

"I don't insist. I have no right to do that. But it would give me a great deal of pleasure if you would call."

"Then I will do so."

"When?"

"Whenever you say."

"Next Wednesday evening then. Will that be convenient for you?"

"Any evening will be convenient for me that suits you."

"It's very nice of you to say that. Well, I will look for you next Wednesday evening. Have you our address?"

"I haven't the number, but I know Mr. Henderson lives somewhere on Commonwealth Avenue."

Miss Grant mentioned the number and Joe made a note of it.

"I think I will make a purchase or two on the next floor and then go home, as I am afraid I can't wait any longer for uncle. Goodbye."

"Goodbye, Miss Grant," said Joe, taking the dainty hand she extended to him.

Then she walked out of the office.

"You seem to be pretty thick with Mr. Henderson's niece," said the cashier with a provoking smile, as Joe was passing his desk.

"I was just talking with her for a few minutes, sir."

"It seemed to be a very interesting conversation."

"She was speaking about the shoplifter I caught, and also about the leather bag affair."

"Complimenting you, of course."

Joe flushed and made no reply.

"She's a very nice young lady, don't you think?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mr. Henderson thinks there isn't another girl like her in the world."

"You don't blame him for thinking that, do you?"

"Certainly not. I guess there isn't any doubt but she'll come in for all he's worth when he dies. In that case she's bound to be a wealthy heiress. She'll make a fine catch for some of our young aristocrats."

Joe thought the young man who got her for his wife would be uncommonly lucky.

"By the way, Joe, you might as well take this check over to the New England Bank and see if it's all right. I have my doubts about it. It may save time if I can get a line on it right off," said the cashier.

"All right, sir. It won't take me but a few minutes for the bank is only three blocks away."

Joe took the check, got his hat and left the office.

He didn't get out of the building as soon as he thought he would.

One of the floor-walkers held him to tell him a funnygag.

Then two of the pretty salesladies with whom he was a great favorite beckoned him to their counter for just a minute to tell him a great secret.

It took them three minutes to tell it, and he couldn't get away.

Then another salesgirl wanted him to take a note to a friend of hers at the stationery counter.

It was very important, she said, and she had been wondering how she could get it to her friend till she spied Joe, and of course she knew he'd oblige her just this once.

Naturally he couldn't resist her appeal.

Altogether he was ten minutes getting to the sidewalk from the office.

As events proved it was a fortunate thing that he was delayed.

Starting to cross the street he saw Elsie Grant just ahead of him.

An electric car was coming up the street while two cabs were coming down.

Concealed by them an automobile was following.

The girl stepped into an open space to avoid the cabs just as the auto swung around into view at a quick pace.

Elsie saw that she was caught in a trap and she uttered a scream of terror.

Joe was close behind her and saw her perilous predicament, too.

He jumped forward, caught her in his arms, and was struck and flung a dozen feet by the machine.

He landed in an unconscious heap in the street with the girl in his arms right before one of the cabs which the driver barely halted in time to avoid running them down.

CHAPTER XI.

WHEREIN JOE IS OBLIGED TO GO TO A HOSPITAL.

Of course great excitement followed the accident, which was seen by dozens of people, including Mr. Henderson, who had just come to the store.

The auto was stopped and the chauffeur, followed by the owner, a big capitalist, jumped out and hastened to pick up the unconscious boy and his lovely burden whose life he had undoubtedly saved, perhaps at the cost of his own.

Mr. Henderson had recognized both Joe and his niece at the moment they were hurled aside by the machine, and he rushed forward in a fever of anxiety.

He was, of course, chiefly concerned about his niece, whom he regarded as his greatest earthly treasure.

He reached the spot as the chauffeur was lifting both the victims of the accident together, for Joe's grasp on the girl was so tight that it was only with much difficulty that Elsie Grant could be taken from his convulsive grip.

The side of his head was covered with blood where it had struck the hard stones and his face was deathly white.

"Uncle," gasped Elsie faintly, as the merchant clasped her in his arms.

"My darling," he cried tremulously, "are you much hurt?"

"I don't know. I don't think so."

He placed her on her feet and she stood up without difficulty, having really suffered no injury beyond the smashing of her hat and the partial wrecking of her gown.

At that moment her eyes lighted on Joe as he was carried to the sidewalk and she uttered a suppressed scream.

"Joe Sturgess!" she cried. "He saved my life. Is he dead?"

"I hope not, my dear. Come with me."

"Oh, uncle, never mind me. Do look after Mr. Sturgess, please do," she begged with tears in her eyes and deep anxiety in her tones.

"I will see that everything is done for him, never fear, Elsie. I saw him grab you and swing you away from the automobile, and then the machine struck him, and you were both hurled many feet away. I sincerely trust that he may not be seriously injured. I'd rather lose \$50,000 than that he should die."

"Oh, he mustn't die, uncle; indeed, he mustn't," she quivered tearfully.

A big crowd gathered about the senseless and apparently badly injured boy as he was laid on the edge of the sidewalk by the chauffeur.

A policeman came up and drove the curious onlookers back as well as he could.

The owner of the machine was deeply agitated and concerned over the accident.

There was no doubt that the chauffeur would be arrested, and all kinds of trouble was likely to follow, especially if the boy should die.

The capitalist had a vision of heavy damages whether the boy died or not.

Elsie wanted to go to Joe and help him, but Mr. Henderson objected on the ground that she could be of no use.

He took her into the store, where the report of the accident was already being circulated, though nobody knew who the victims were.

Calling a floor-walker he directed him to take his niece up to his private room, where she was told to wait until he had found out just how serious Joe's injuries were.

An ambulance was summoned, and arrived in unusually quick time.

The surgeon examined the boy and announced that one of his arms and a rib were broken, and that he had suffered a number of minor injuries.

Whether he was internally hurt also he declined to say.

The lad would have to be taken to the hospital and sub-

jected to a critical overhauling by the house surgeon before a definite opinion could be passed on his case.

So Joe, still unconscious, was put into the ambulance and driven away.

Mr. Henderson, as soon as he reached his private room, told Elsie what the ambulance surgeon had said.

"Poor boy!" she cried sympathetically. "Oh, uncle, I shall be dreadfully unhappy if he should die. You don't think he will, do you?"

"I should feel deeply grieved myself if he did," replied the merchant earnestly. "We must hope for the best. He is a brave, chivalrous lad. I will spend thousands of dollars, if necessary, to save him."

"Of course you will, uncle, for he saved my life," she said, sobbingly.

Mr. Henderson called the hospital up on the 'phone and asked for the head surgeon.

As soon as he got the doctor on the wire he told him about the accident and requested that everything that his skill could suggest must be done for the boy.

"Spare no expense whatever," said the merchant. "The boy must be saved at any cost, for he saved my niece's life and I am deeply grateful to him."

"The ambulance hasn't reached here yet, Mr. Henderson," replied the surgeon, "but as soon as it does I will give the case my special attention and let you know just how badly injured the boy is, and what the chances are for his recovery."

"I will make you a handsome present if you pull him around all right."

"Thank you, sir; but that isn't necessary. As long as you guarantee to meet all extra expenses we will put him in a room by himself, and I will detail special nurses to look after him."

"I have told you to spare no expense. Don't let money stand in the way. Let him have the very best treatment the hospital can afford and have the bill sent to me."

"All right, Mr. Henderson. You may depend that everything will be done for him."

An hour later, after Elsie had been sent home in a cab, the merchant was called up by the hospital.

"I have given the patient a thorough examination and am glad to report that he has not sustained any vital injuries, Mr. Henderson. He is now conscious and in bed in a private room, with a special nurse in attendance. His most serious hurts are a fractured rib and a broken left arm. He has suffered many contusions, the worst of which is a deep cut in the skull. There is no fracture, however, and he is bound to come out all right in a short time. There is no occasion for you to worry about him."

"I should be glad to receive a daily report of his condition," said the merchant, feeling greatly relieved.

"I will arrange that you shall have it," replied the head surgeon.

Elsie awaited her uncle's return home in a fever of anxious impatience.

She could not bear the thought that her brave rescuer should die.

His fate had become a matter of the utmost importance to her.

She watched from the sitting-room window for the approach of her uncle's auto.

When it hove in sight she flew downstairs and met him in the hall.

"I have good news for you, Elsie," Mr. Henderson said, noting her anxious look.

"Then Joe Sturgess won't die," she cried joyfully.

"The head surgeon assured me that he would come around all right in a short time."

Elsie threw her arms around her uncle's neck and cried from very joy.

"I'm so glad! I'm so glad!" she cried.

"Of course you are, my dear, and so am I. He is a fine lad—a mighty fine lad."

Before Mr. Henderson left the store he despatched a note to Joe's mother, briefly explaining the accident her son had met with.

He told her what hospital he had been taken to and assured her that he would be all right again in due time.

He wound up with a flattering comment on the boy's bravery, and told her that he would take special care of her son's future, not only because he had a fine opinion of Joe as a smart and faithful employee, but because he was grateful to him for saving the life of his niece.

Mrs. Morse was greatly startled by the receipt of this letter and hurried to the hospital at once.

She was not permitted to see her son, as it was after visiting hours, but the attendant who saw her in the office told her that the boy was in no danger of losing his life.

She had to be satisfied with this and returned home after ascertaining when she would be allowed to see Joe next day.

The papers printed an account of the accident and stated that the chauffeur had been arrested and admitted to bail, which was furnished by his employer.

Next day the capitalist called on Mr. Henderson and offered to pay all of Joe's expenses while at the hospital and present him with any reasonable sum of money as compensation in order to save his chauffeur from prosecution and himself from a suit for damages.

Mr. Henderson said that he himself had guaranteed the boy's expenses, and that no compromise would be entertained until an investigation in court had established to what extent the chauffeur was responsible for the accident.

Elsie Grant called at the hospital as soon as the rules of the institution permitted her admission.

She found Joe's mother by his bedside, and Joe looking and feeling as well as could be expected under the circumstances.

The boy was pleased to see the charming niece of his employer show so much interest in his welfare and told her so.

"Why shouldn't I take an interest in you?" she asked. "You saved me from being run down by that automobile, and I am very, very grateful to you. How brave you were to risk your life to save me!"

"You don't suppose I could stand by and see you hurt without making an effort to help you, do you?" he said in a weak voice.

"You were very good to do it," she answered, "and I shall never forget what you did for me as long as I live."

"All right, we'll let it go at that," replied Joe with a faint smile.

"Can I do anything for you now?" she asked him.

"No, Miss Grant. Mother and the nurse are doing all that is necessary."

He then told his mother that Miss Grant was Mr. Henderson's niece.

Elsie and Mrs. Morse took quite a fancy to each other, and Joe was glad to see them on a friendly footing.

Finally Elsie left, saying she would call every day to see him.

After she had gone the boy often glanced with pleasure at the bouquet of roses the girl had brought to him.

Elsie kept her word and called every day, bringing flowers each time.

Mr. Henderson also called several times, assured the boy of his gratitude and warm friendship and promised him a higher position in the office when he was up and doing once more.

On the following Wednesday when Elsie called Joe was much better.

"Yes, I'm feeling quite chipper to-day," he told her. "I believe I promised to call on you this evening. I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me," he added with a smile. "The doctor wouldn't think of letting me out of bed yet awhile."

"Of course he wouldn't," she laughed. "Your excuse is accepted. I shall expect to see you at our house when you are fully recovered. I guess you haven't any doubts now about your welcome. I told uncle that I invited you, and he said he will be glad to have you call whenever it is convenient to you."

Although his mother called every day, Elsie's visits were just as eagerly looked forward to by Joe.

She was like a ray of sunshine coming into the room, and the boy always looked brighter for her coming.

He thought her the loveliest girl he had ever met in his life, and he began to think more of her than was really good for him, considering the wide difference of their social standing.

He found it far from pleasant to have his body encased in a plaster-of-paris jacket while his fractured rib was knitting, and his broken arm also pained him a good bit at times.

The cut in his head gradually healed up, and the other bruises disappeared before he was able to leave his bed.

At length he was allowed to walk about with his arm in a sling.

He now spent most of his time in the hospital garden, for the weather was fine, and there he received his daily visitors.

Finally he was declared well enough to leave the hospital for good, and that was a happy day for him.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH ELSIE GRANT ENTERTAINS JOE AT HER HOME.

When Joe reported again at the store he found himself a hero for fair.

Everybody had long since read in the newspapers about his gallant rescue of Elsie Grant, the merchant's niece, and there were lots of the salesgirls who felt real jealous about the matter.

They would much have preferred being rescued by him, for many of the girls were smitten by Joe's good looks and captivated by his gentlemanly manners.

They did not like the idea that another girl had enjoyed the honor they coveted, but they took comfort from the fact

that the fortunate young lady was so far above Joe's station that nothing serious was likely, in their opinion, to result from it.

Mr. Henderson had decided to advance Joe in the office, so the boy was made general assistant to the cashier.

The position was practically created for him, and his wages were advanced to \$15 a week.

The wages began on the week he was injured and he received back salary for all the time he was away.

Many of his former duties were attached to the position, and among other things he continued to carry the leather bag with the day's receipts to the bank.

The case against the capitalist's chauffeur had been postponed until Joe was able to go into court.

He and Elsie appeared and testified concerning the unexpected appearance of the auto from behind the cabs, and both declared that, in their opinion, the man was going faster than he should have done in a crowded thoroughfare.

The chauffeur, of course, denied that he had been going fast at all, and his employer naturally backed him up.

A diagram of the street at the point where the accident happened, on which the positions of the car, cabs and auto were shown, was submitted in evidence.

The object of this was to show that had the chauffeur exercised proper caution he would have turned out at so slow a speed that he could have stopped his machine before reaching Joe and the girl.

Each side was represented by a legal luminary of reputation, and considerable eloquence and argument expended on the magistrate.

As some doubt remained in the judge's mind as to the exact culpability of the chauffeur he simply assessed him \$100 fine, which his employer immediately paid and that settled the matter.

Joe and Elsie, however, still had the privilege of bringing suit against the capitalist, through their guardians, for a considerable amount.

The gentleman was advised by his lawyer to compromise the matter out of court if he could do so.

Accordingly he approached Mr. Henderson on the subject.

The merchant said that he thought Joe was entitled to compensation for the injuries he had suffered in saving Elsie Grant from being run down by the machine.

"If that boy had not been on hand at the critical moment your auto would in all likelihood have killed or fatally injured my niece. In that case you would have found yourself in a very serious position, Mr. Drew. Joe Sturgess saved you from that, and that act alone, even if he had not been hurt, would have merited your consideration. As for my niece, although she was not actually hurt, still she suffered from the shock, and I have been advised by my lawyer that a sufficient cause for an action in a civil court exists against you. My niece, however, is willing to waive her rights in the matter if you do the right thing by young Sturgess."

"What do you consider the right thing, Mr. Henderson?" asked the capitalist.

"That rests entirely with yourself. In behalf of Sturgess I will say that he does not expect you to come up heavily because you are a rich man. All he is looking for is a fair recognition from you. He nearly lost his life through

no fault of his, and the fact that your chauffeur got off with a \$100 fine would not greatly prejudice his case if he applied to a civil court for damages, in fact I think it would strengthen it."

"I am willing to give the young man my check for \$5,000. It is probably as much as a jury would award him if he were successful," said the capitalist.

Mr. Henderson agreed to settle the matter for that amount, and so after a paper to that effect had been drawn up and signed by Joe, the money was paid over to him, and he deposited it in a savings bank.

He was now worth \$6,000 in his own name, and he felt pretty independent.

The first hundred dollars he received from Mr. Henderson he presented to his mother at the time he received the \$1,000 from his employer in connection with the leather bag affair.

Joe bought a new up-to-date suit of clothes, and other things to match, in order to look as well as he could on the occasion of his first visit to Elsie Grant at her uncle's swell residence on Commonwealth Avenue.

We are bound to say that after he had got all tucked out he compared very favorably with any of the young lady's male acquaintances.

It was so unusual for Joe to make a call on any girl, let alone such a wealthy connected miss as Elsie Grant, that the boy felt decidedly nervous over his first appearance in what might be called Boston society.

When he alighted from a car a block below his destination and started toward Mr. Henderson's house he began to be conscious that a species of stage fright was coming over him.

The nearer he drew to the house the worse he got.

When he finally reached it he walked right on till he came to the next corner, for he could not muster up enough courage to enter the gate and ring the bell.

He turned around, mentally kicked himself, and started back for the house.

But his funk came on again and once more he passed the house.

"Hello, Sturgess, where are you going?" called out a voice.

Joe stopped and looked at a gentleman who had also stopped and was regarding him intently.

The boy recognized Mr. Henderson.

"Just going to your house, sir," he replied.

"Why, you've passed it. You're going out of your way. Come with me and I'll take you there. I was out on a little call and am just going back."

He took the boy by the arm, and Joe knew now that he'd have to face the music.

Mr. Henderson entered with his latch key and took Joe up to the sitting-room, where they found Elsie in a stylish gown, waiting for the maid to announce that Joe had arrived.

She was surprised to see her uncle lead her visitor into the room unheralded.

She hastened to welcome Joe and make him feel at home.

Although the sitting-room was very modestly furnished for a mansion on Commonwealth Avenue, Joe had never seen such a fine room before.

The gilt chairs looked so frail that he was afraid to sit

on one, while the tete-a-tete, a sort of compound chair shaped like the letter S, looked so unusual to him that he was going to avoid it when Elsie led him to it and indicated that he was to take possession of one of the seats while she gracefully sat in the other, which brought the central curve of the letter S between them, across which they carried on their conversation.

Joe gradually thawed out under the fascinating influence exercised on him by Miss Elsie, who had the art of winning her way into the hearts of her visitors and friends down to a fine point.

Inside of half an hour Joe was talking with her as if he had known her for years, and he was enjoying every moment of the tete-a-tete.

She got him to talk about himself, and his hopes and ambitions, and then she told him about the fashionable school she was attending, and what she was learning there.

As the evening wore away she asked him if he liked music, and finding that he was particularly partial to it she went to a fine upright piano that stood against one of the walls of the room and played some of her favorite pieces.

Then she sang several songs for him in so charming a voice and style that Joe was more taken with her than ever.

Finally the clock on the mantel struck ten, and the boy, who was having the time of his life, reluctantly suggested that it was time for him to go.

She easily induced him to remain half an hour longer and then accompanied him to the front door.

"You must come again soon," she said, in such a bewitching way that Joe replied that it would afford him much pleasure to do so.

Then he took his leave, feeling assured that Elsie was the finest girl in the world, and conscious that she occupied a very large share of his thoughts.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW JOE FELL A VICTIM TO THE PLANS OF THREE CROOKS.

Three months elapsed and Joe became a regular Wednesday night visitor of Elsie Grant's.

Although all concerned in the leather bag robbery, Bentley Morse excepted, were serving time, the episode had not been forgotten by two experienced crooks who had read about the matter in the papers, and attended the trial of Seton Hall and Homer Carroll.

The large amount of money that was daily sent to the Tradesmen's Bank from the Henderson department store excited their cupidity, and they put their heads together for the purpose of devising some means of stealing the bag themselves.

They proceeded to watch both the store and the bank to discover who the new messenger was, and it wasn't long before they found out that Joe Sturgess was the successor of Carroll, but they were disappointed to find that he did not carry the bag on foot, as Carroll had done, but in either an automobile or a cab.

Under these circumstances it looked as if there was a poor show of getting away with the bag with any chance of success.

After some months had passed they mentioned the matter

to a third crook, and the three held a pow-wow on the subject.

"If that boy made a practice of going to the bank every day in a cab we could figure out some way of getting the best of him and making away with the bag," said one of the crooks; "but as it is only about once in two or three weeks that he uses a cab I don't see how we can manage the job. It is simply out of the question to get at the bag in an open auto on a crowded street. If the three of us held up the auto and managed to get the bag we'd be run down before we got a block away unless we had extraordinary luck."

"Why does the messenger take a cab at all if it's his practice to use an auto?" asked the new man, whose name was Jim Brady.

"He takes it when he can't get the auto, I guess. If we wanted to reach him and the bag through the cab we'd have to watch the store every day around eleven o'clock and be prepared to act when we saw him take the cab. I don't see that it would be any easier to hold the cab up than the auto. I think we'd get caught in either case if you want to know my opinion."

"I don't think so," said Brady. "My idea would be to play off drunk and get in front of the horse so the driver would have to rein in to avoid running me down. As soon as the cab came to a stand-still you two chaps could seize the chance to open the cab door, jump in, grab the messenger and choke or drug him. Then one could step out and follow the cab and the other could drop the bag out when he saw the best chance while I would cover the retreat of the man who picked it up."

"I know a better way if it could be made to work"

"Let's hear it."

The crook outlined his plan, and his companions agreed that it was all right if it could be pulled off, but the chances seemed to be rather slim.

A week later when the cashier of the department store was ready to send the previous day's receipts to the bank, Mr. Henderson's auto was not available, that gentleman not having reached the store yet.

The cashier waited for nearly an hour and then told Joe to go and get a cab.

He got one without trouble, and told the driver to bring his vehicle around to the employees' entrance on the back street.

When the driver did so, a man, who had been standing for over an hour in the neighborhood asked him if he had been engaged to go to the Tradesmen's Bank.

The driver nodded.

"They come with me."

The speaker led the cabman upstairs in the building adjoining Henderson's store, and told him to wait on the landing till the young man who had engaged him came out of one of the doors and asked him to help him down with a bag.

While the unsuspecting driver watched the door in question the man who had brought him up hurried downstairs and mounted to the cabby's seat.

Joe presently came out of the store entrance with the bank bag in his hand, saw the waiting cab, and as the bogus driver kept his face averted he thought it was the man he had engaged, especially as the cab was the right one.

"Get to the bank as soon as you can," he said to the man on the box, and then entered the cab.

The vehicle started off at a smart rate, but slowed up at the first corner and took another man on the box.

Two blocks further on it got tangled up with sundry other vehicles and had to stop.

The man who had been taken up got down and opened the door of the cab.

"What do you want?" asked Joe, placing his hand in his pocket where he carried his revolver.

The man half stepped in and grabbed his arm just as the opposite door was opened and Jim Brady got in, leaned forward and placed a handkerchief containing some drug over the boy's face.

The first man then got fully in and slammed the door.

Joe made a desperate struggle against the two men, but the drug was a powerful one and he became unconscious about the time the cab started up again.

The cab continued on at a hot speed, turning into other streets until it finally drew up in front of a three-story red brick dwelling, much in vogue thirty or more years since.

One of the men in the cab got out, glanced up and down the street and around in a wary way, and then, walking to the basement door, pulled an old-fashioned bell handle.

The tinkle of a bell somewhere at the end of an entry reached his ears, and presently the door was opened by a hard-looking man of perhaps thirty-five.

Nothing more repulsive in the shape of a human being could be imagined than this individual.

He was thin, gaunt and bony, like the animated skeleton of a sideshow.

His face was long and had very high cheek bones, after which the flesh receded suddenly, leaving two hollow cavities beneath.

This peculiarity, added to a heavy protruding jaw, full of large teeth, which he could rattle like a pair of castanets, and a pair of eyes deeply sunken in their sockets, gave him a skull-like appearance that was truly horrible.

"Hold the door open, Jud," said the man from the cab, "we've got a visitor to fetch into the house."

"All right, Jim," replied the animated skeleton, with a ghastly grin.

Jim returned to the cab where he assisted his companion on the inside to lift out the unconscious Joe Sturgess and carry him into the house.

The driver descended from his perch and followed them with the bag containing the day's receipts of the department store.

In a few minutes the bogus caddy returned to the sidewalk, remounted his seat and drove away.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS.

When Joe regained his senses he found himself in a dark, cellar-like place.

Joe's first impression of his quarters, as he sat up and inspected it in no little wonder, was not particularly reassuring.

His idea was that he was laboring under some kind of a nightmare which would presently wear off.

He rubbed his eyes once or twice to take a better look around, but it did not materially improve his vision.

"If this is a dream it's a pretty realistic one," he muttered.

What other remarks his surroundings might have conjured up it is impossible to say, but at that point the attack made upon him in the cab suddenly unrolled itself before his mind's eye.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "This thing is no dream after all but the real thing. I've been robbed of the bank bag by a couple of crooks and then brought to this hole to be kept a prisoner until they consider it safe to release me. What will Mr. Henderson say when he learns that I failed to successfully defend his property even with a revolver in my possession, in the broad daylight and on a crowded thoroughfare?"

He got on his feet and walked around the room.

He found an iron door in one of the walls, but it was securely locked.

There seemed to be no other mode of entrance or exit.

He gave himself up to gloomy reflections.

As soon as he failed to return to the store within a reasonable time the cashier would undoubtedly communicate with the bank, and when it was learned that neither he nor the bag had turned up at the bank the matter would be at once reported to the superintendent, and Mr. Harker would in turn call Mr. Henderson's attention to the fact.

Of course a detective or two would be called in to investigate, but by that time the thieves would have skipped the city with the contents of the bag, and the money might never be recovered.

Thus half an hour elapsed, though it seemed more than twice that long to Joe.

Then there was a sound at the door.

The bolt outside was drawn back, the big key clicked in the lock, and the door was opened with some caution by the man with the death's head.

He carried a lantern in one hand, and in the other a tray with some dishes on it.

Joe turned around and surveyed the newcomer with a look not unmixed with fear, for the fellow looked terribly grotesque in the ghostly light of the lantern.

"So yer 've come to yer senses, have yer?" chuckled Jud, pausing near the door.

"I have," replied Joe, regarding the horrible looking visitor nervously.

"Where am I?" asked Joe, curiously.

"You're in a cellar."

"I know that. I mean, whereabouts in Boston?"

"I can't put you up to that. It ain't safe. You'll be allowed to go in a day or two, and we don't want the perlice to know nothin' about this crib if we kin help it, see?"

"I was drugged and robbed in a cab, wasn't I?"

"I don't know nothin' about it. All I know is that you was brought here, and I was told to take good care of you till I got orders to let yer go."

"Then you won't tell me anything?"

"Nope. It wouldn't do yer any good anyway."

"It was a pretty slick game that was worked on me," said Joe, in a sore tone of voice.

The animated skeleton grinned.

"I hadn't time even to draw my——"

For the first time Joe thought of the small revolver he always carried with him when he went to the bank.

He instinctively put his hand in his pocket where he kept it during the trip.

He didn't expect to find it there, for he supposed that the thieves had relieved him of it.

To his surprise and satisfaction his fingers closed upon it.

The rascals had not ever taken the trouble to search him.

Immediately a daring idea occurred to him.

The door was partly open and nothing stood between him and the outside of the cellar but the hideous rascal with the skull's head.

Whether the fellow was armed or not Joe believed he could overawe him with his loaded weapon.

At any rate the plucky boy determined to make a break for freedom.

Perhaps he would not be too late to put the police on the track of the thieves and the money, which they had no doubt long since taken from the bag.

The mere chance that he might be able to do something to retrieve his reputation appealed thrillingly to the boy.

His interrupted sentence and the sudden look in Joe's eyes were not without their effect on the man with the death head.

Suspecting that the prisoner was contemplating a sudden move, the man whirled about and started for the door.

"Stop!" cried Joe, drawing his revolver and covering the rascal. "Another step and I'll shoot!"

Joe stopped in an undecided way and glanced over his shoulder.

He didn't really expect to see a weapon in the prisoner's hand.

When he did see the light of the lantern glistening from the barrel of Joe's revolver he uttered a gasp and stood transfixed.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW JOE MAKES AN EFFORT TO RECOVER THE STOLEN MONEY.

"Throw up your hands and step back here," ordered Joe in a resolute tone.

The grotesque looking rascal hesitated and seemed on the point of making a dash out through the door.

Had it been wide open he might have chanced it, but the few seconds he would need to pull the iron door open so he could pass through would easily give time enough for the boy to put a couple of balls into his body if he chose.

It was true the report of the weapon would attract the attention of his pals who were upstairs at the time, and they would probably be able to prevent the prisoner's escape; but Jud had a whole lot of respect for his own life, and he didn't care to sacrifice it for the benefit of his associates.

Noting the man's indecision, Joe stepped from behind the packing case and advanced near the rascal.

"Get over on that bed," cried Joe in a voice that showed he meant business.

"Hang you!" snarled the death's head. "Where did yer get that gun?"

"That's for me to know and you to find out. Are you going to make a move?"

"You daren't fire," said Jud, doggedly. "There's three chaps upstairs who'd hear the report and they'd be down on you like a load of bricks."

"I'll chance that. I've got six bullets in this gun. One is enough to settle you, the other five will stand off your friends, I'll bet. I'll give you half a minute to make up your mind whether you'll do as I have told you or take the consequences. I'm going to get out of here if I have to shoot every man in the house."

Joe spoke as if he meant what he said, and Jud concluded it would be wise to give in to what appeared to be the inevitable.

He shuffled over to the bed and sat down on it.

"Lie down!" commanded the boy.

Much against his will the death's head complied.

"Not lengthways but across it," said Joe.

"What dif—"

"Do as I tell you."

Jud obeyed.

"Turn over on your face."

The man turned over.

Joe quickly seized a piece of cord he saw hanging from a nail and knelt on the fellow's back.

Laying down his revolver he seized Jud's wrists and drew them behind him.

The rascal began to struggle.

"Stop that or I'll shoot a hole through you!" cried Joe.

The man subsided and the boy tied his wrists tightly together.

As a further precaution he tied his ankles also.

The man with the death's head was now helpless.

Joe rose, took up his weapon, also took possession of the lantern and walked out of the cellar, closing and bolting the door after him.

He found himself in an open space with a stairway leading to the first floor.

He walked up with due caution and reached an entry.

Then he paused and listened.

The man with the death's head had remarked that there were three men up above.

Two of them, Joe argued, must be the thieves who had attacked and done him up.

If they were in the house they no doubt had the money with them.

Joe wondered why they had not skipped the town with their ill-gotten booty.

He didn't know that they were waiting for dark which was coming on before venturing to take a train for New York City.

Their faces were well known to every detective in the city, and though they had sent out and purchased false beards and whiskers, they determined to make their escape doubly sure.

At the end of the entry was the door leading to the sidewalk and through which the boy had been brought into the house.

Joe, hearing no sounds, made his way to it and saw that it was both locked and bolted in two places.

As the key was in the lock, and the bolts worked almost noiselessly, the boy soon had the door open and was looking out into a quiet, shady street.

"I wonder what part of Boston this is?" he mused. "It's

evidently a residential section. They brought me here in the cab, of course. Well, it won't take me many minutes to find out where I am as soon as I leave this house, and there's nothing to prevent me doing that as far as I can see. Still, if Mr. Henderson's money is here I ought to make a try to recover it. With my revolver I think I can hold my own against the three scamps if I can take them off their guard. It's pretty near sundown I see. I'll bet there are several detectives out looking for me by this time, and I'll gamble on it that there's been considerable excitement in the office this afternoon."

Leaving the door unlocked Joe listened at the door of the front basement room.

Hearing nothing inside he ventured to open the door and look inside.

The room was furnished as a dining-room on a cheap scale.

There was nobody in there.

Joe passed on to the back room, which was a kitchen, and he found a lot of dirty dishes on a plain deal table waiting to be washed.

There was the remains of a fire in the stove, and he guessed that the man with the death's head looked after the cooking arrangement.

Taking off his shoes, Joe walked up to the next floor.

Here he heard plenty of evidences of occupation proceeding from the front room.

He distinguished at least three men laughing and talking in there, and smelt the odor of burning tobacco.

He also heard the clinking of glasses which showed that the men were drinking.

From the little he could hear of their conversation he guessed they were playing cards.

There was a door communicating with what he judged to be the back parlor, and he took the risk of opening it and looking in.

The folding doors between the rooms were open a few inches, and through the aperture Joe heard the voices of the men quite plainly.

He put on his shoes and glided in, closing the door after him.

Going to the opening between the doors he saw three men gathered around a centre table drinking, smoking and playing cards for money.

And the stakes were not small either, for each man appeared to be well supplied with cash.

As Joe recognized two of the men as those who had entered the cab and overpowered him, he had no difficulty in surmising where the money they were playing for came from.

On the floor in one corner lay the leather bag, with a great, gaping slit in it made by a knife.

"I never seen such luck as you're havin', Jim Brady," said one of the men with an imprecation, as the man named Jim gathered in the stakes that had been deposited in the center of the table. "I thought I could play poker, and so did Bill here, but everythin' seems to be goin' your way."

"You mustn't mind that," chuckled Brady. "The ladies all say I have a very taking way about me. In fact I think we've all a taking way about us. Our business is to take whatever we can lay our hands on."

"How much have you won so far?" asked the stout man, named Bill.

"Five thou., more or less," replied Brady carelessly.

"Which means that Chick and me are out that much," said Bill.

"I reckon," grinned Jim.

"Well, as I want a few thousands to sport on when we get there I think I'll quit. And I guess if Chick don't want you to cotton on his share of to-day's job he'll drop out, too," said Bill.

"We've got an hour or two to put in before train time, so we might as well keep on," said Brady persuasively. "Luck is liable to turn your way any time, and you may both recover all I've won from you."

As Chick was willing to continue the game Bill reluctantly took another hand.

Joe Sturgess looked at the three men and wondered how he was going to get the better of them.

At that moment Brady picked up the whiskey bottle and found it empty.

"There's another bottle downstairs. Who's going for it?" he said.

"What's the matter with makin' Jud fetch it up?" asked Bill.

"Then go out in the hall and yell for him," said Jim.

Bill got up and going to the head of the stairs shouted to Jud; but as the man with the death's head was bound and locked up in the cellar he couldn't very well answer.

The crook yelled several times, and getting no response he grumblingly went down into the basement after the whiskey himself.

A sudden idea occurred to Joe Sturgess, and he slipped out of the back parlor and followed him.

He heard Bill in the dining-room and cautiously looked in at that room.

Bill was drawing the cork of the whiskey bottle with his back to the door.

Joe grabbed a small rolling pin, slipped up behind Bill and with one blow laid him out senseless on the floor.

"That's one disposed of," breathed the boy. "If Chick or Brady will come down hunting for him I'll give him a dose of the same medicine, and then I'll have only one left to handle."

With this reflection in his mind Joe, after relieving the crook of all his stealings, which amounted to several thousand dollars, retired to the kitchen to await developments.

CHAPTER XVI.

STRIKING IT RICH.

Five minutes passed and then Joe heard one of the men come to the head of the stairs and yell to Bill, asking what was keeping him so long below.

As a matter of course he got no answer, for Bill was not in a condition to reply to the hail.

Presently Joe heard the man, who he recognized as Chick, coming down, and he slipped behind the kitchen door.

As Chick walked into the kitchen something hit him on the head and he ceased to take any more interest in things.

Joe went through his pockets and got about the same amount from him that he had taken from Bill, then he dragged the rascal into the dining-room.

"That's number two," chuckled Joe. "Brady is sure to come down also when they fail to return, and I guess it's safer to meet him here than upstairs. That rolling-pin is safer and surer than a revolver. I must hunt up a bag to put the money in."

He found a clothes bag and had just finished stuffing the notes into it when Jim Brady came to the head of the stairs and roared out:

"What in thunder is keeping you chaps downstairs?"

Receiving no reply, he yelled again, but with no better result.

Then he also came downstairs, swearing like a trooper.

Joe lay in wait for him and laid him out as stiff as the others.

"Gee! But this has been easy," he laughed. "Always take the enemy in sections and you can beat him every time."

He took about \$16,000 out of Brady's pockets, and then with some clothes line he not only tied the crooks hand and foot, but tied them together as well.

Returning upstairs he examined the leather bag and found the bankbook and the checks in it.

He decided to put the money back in the bag and tie up the opening with a piece of cloth.

After doing that he left the house.

He made a note of the number of the house, and on reaching the corner saw the name of the street, and then knew that he was in South Boston.

He went to a telephone station, found out the number of the nearest police station and got the officer in charge on the wire.

He told him the story of the robbery of the leather bag; how he had been carried to a certain house in a certain street in South Boston by the crooks and locked up a prisoner in the cellar, and how he had managed to turn the tables on the rascals and recover the stolen money.

"Send a patrol wagon with officers to this telephone station and I'll guide them to the house where the crooks are tied up," concluded Joe.

In a short time the wagon with half a dozen policemen arrived.

Joe got in the wagon and it was driven to the house.

The three senseless crooks in the dining-room, and the man with the death's head in the cellar were loaded on the wagon, taken to the station and locked up.

As the police insisted on retaining the leather bag and its contents Joe had to give it up.

Then he took a car for his home, which he reached in good time for supper.

He told his surprised mother about his adventure with the crooks and she could hardly believe him, it seemed so strange.

Hurriedly dressing himself in his best clothes he started for Mr. Henderson's home on Commonwealth Avenue.

He reached there just as the merchant and his niece were finishing dinner.

"Why, Sturgess," cried Mr. Henderson, "where have you been since you left the store with the money bag? The driver of the cab you engaged came into the store soon after your departure and raised a big fuss, saying that his cab had been stolen. On phoning the bank and finding you had not arrived, foul play was suspected by the superin-

tendent, who immediately notified the police. Several detectives have been looking for you and the cab all afternoon, and are still on the scent. Let me know what happened to you."

Thereupon Joe told his story to the astonished merchant and his niece.

"Upon my word, you are a wonderful boy," cried Mr. Henderson. "You may have been easy for the thieves at the start because they took you off your guard, but you've more than redeemed yourself by capturing them and recovering the money."

Elsie couldn't compliment Joe enough, and declared he was the greatest boy on earth.

The story was in all the papers next day, and Joe was well praised for his courage and skill in the matter.

Eventually the four crooks were tried and sent up for ten years each, except the man with the death's head, and he only got three years.

Mr. Henderson insisted on giving Joe \$5,000 as an evidence of his appreciation.

From that time Joe's advancement was rapid until he was finally made assistant superintendent of the store.

Two years later he was promoted to the post of superintendent.

Before he assumed his duties there was a quiet wedding at the Henderson home, the principals of which were Joe and Elsie.

After their wedding tour they took up their home with Mr. Henderson.

For ten years Joe filled the post of superintendent at the store, and then the death of Mr. Henderson made Mrs. Joe Sturgess, nee Elsie Grant, sole owner of the establishment, and Joe stepped into the late Mr. Henderson's private office as the general manager of his wife's interests.

Practically he was the owner of the big store, and was regarded as such by the employees and all he had dealings with.

Thus Joe Sturgess rose from the humble capacity of office boy in the store to that of merchant prince, another instance of an ambitious and smart American boy Striking it Rich.

THE END.

Read "LUCKY IN WALL STREET; OR, THE BOY WHO TRIMMED THE BROKERS," which will be the next number (148) of "Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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GOOD STORIES.

From the hawkbill turtle of the Carribean Sea comes the tortoise shell of commerce.

The great dancing expert, My Fancy, who is doing the Moss & Stoll tour, has danced on gold dust. "When starring with Charles Godfrey's company in Western Australia," she told me, "no sand was procurable for my dance, so the people in the place said they would get me some gold dust, and accordingly they brought quite a quantity of the precious stuff along, and I found that it answered the purpose very well. I reckon that was about the queerest use gold has ever been put to. Of course it was mixed with quartz, but when I put it in water I could see the gold grains shining ever so prettily."

"I have heard a lot of stories about singular happenings in New York," said one who has lived in the metropolis many years, "but nothing more singular than my experience at a funeral last week. It was in a big flat house. After the service I heard a scream in an adjoining apartment. I learned later that a nervous woman was having a tooth pulled. That was a good mixup for one floor. As we passed to the floor below I heard a woman singing. I was informed that it was her hour for taking a music lesson. Across the hall an afternoon reception was under full swing. The invited guests were arriving. When we got to the first floor a bridal couple were just coming out."

Acting upon the recommendation of the telegraph committee, the Indian Government has just authorized the employment of women operators. The candidates must be between 18 and 30 years of age, and they must be unmarried or widows. They must undergo a training of twelve months in the telegraph training classes, during which time they will receive \$6.65 a month, the same allowance that is drawn by male learners. Selected candidates on leaving the training classes will be on probation for one year. Upon appointment they will receive salaries varying from \$10 to \$26.65, which are very large upon the scale of living expenses in India. There will be pensions, with no liability to transfer; but resignation will be compulsory in the event of marriage.

Few people know that the number of hairs in the human head varies largely according to color. Taking four heads of human hair of different colors, but of equal weight, it has been found that the number of hairs to the head varies as follows: Red, ninety thousand; black, one hundred and three thousand; brown, one hundred and nine thousand; blonde, one hundred and forty thousand. Red hair is usually the coarsest. Dark brown hair is found most frequently in England, the proportions averaging as follows: Red-haired people, thirty; black, sixty-seven; fair, one hundred and eight; light brown, three

hundred and thirty-eight, and dark brown, eight hundred and seven. Four hundred and fifty hairs of average thickness, laid side by side, would cover one inch in width.

Consul William Bardel, of Bamberg, advises that about forty artificial precious stones were recently submitted to the Museum of Natural History at Berlin by an association which claimed to have made these stones, based on the process which recently created so much attention. Several official experts, among whom was the professor having knowledge of gems in the Museum of Natural History, two practical experts, and the chief master of the gold and silversmiths' guild of Germany, were requested to make a careful examination of the merits of the "so-called" new discoveries. The report submitted by this committee of experts read as follows: "Of the variety of stones we examined we were favorably impressed only by the artificial rubies. Among these were some of great beauty and worthy of consideration. The white sapphires were of no account at all; they appeared dull and washed out. Well imitated were the yellow precious stones; they really resembled the topaz very closely; but this invention carries with it only very little value, since the real topaz is found in such large quantities that they sell at from two to three marks (47.6 to 71.4 cents) a gramme. Therefore it would seem of little importance to imitate common stones. Of all the stones we examined, we can only call the artificial rubies a direct success; but the imitation of this latter species of precious stones is no new invention. We therefore declare that there is nothing new or sensational in the claimed invention."

JOKES AND JESTS.

Mrs. McCall—Have you still got that servant girl you had last week? Miss Hiram Offen—Which day last week?

Knicker—I save twenty cents every time I shave myself. Mrs. Knicker—Then why don't you shave five times a day and save more?

Mother-in-law—Has the young man who saved my life yesterday called upon you yet? Son-in-law—Yes, indeed. He has already made his apologies.

"My husband tells me everything he does." "Do you believe him?" "Certainly." "Well, I would hate to believe that my husband does everything he tells me."

"Yes, sir," said the man in Cell 711, "time was when I was admitted to the very best houses." "And what brought you here?" "They caught me coming out."

Caller—That's a nice little dog you have, Tommy. I suppose he has a fancy pedigree? Tommy—No'm; not yet. But I'm goin' to build one for him as soon as paw gives me the lumber.

"Hello! Is this the ticket office of the X., Y. and Z.?" "Yes." "When does to-day's overland flyer leave for San Francisco?" "Who is it talking?" "Mrs. de Trayne." "That's right, ma'am. You miss it. It's just pulling out. Good-by."

The Kindly Old Gentleman—Well, my little man, and what's your name? The Little Man—Pardon, sir, I don't know. The Kindly Old Gentleman—Bless my soul, you don't know? The Little Man—No, sir; please, sir, mother got married again yesterday.

"Do you think petroleum will ever be used for killing mosquitoes?" "I don't know," answered the man who always takes a despondent view of things. "If it is it will be regarded as such a necessity that the price will immediately go to several dollars a gallon."

THE CAPTAIN'S SURPRISE

By Horace Appleton.

He shipped on board the brig *Psyche* as "John Smith," and when he signed the shipping papers he wrote the name in a hand like copper-plate. Of course, we fellows in the fore-castle knew that the name didn't belong to him by right, but it was none of our business, anyway, and so we simply called him "Jack," and let it go at that.

A splendid shipmate was Jack—every inch a sailor, and ready to do any of us a favor.

Before we had got up with Hatteras he had given away half the underclothing in his sea-chest to three or four of the fellows, who, with the usual reckless improvidence of the sailor, had squandered their money in "riotous living," and come away from port with empty clothes-bags, or nearly so.

Of course we all liked him—that is, we who were his shipmates.

But from the very first Captain Granger got down on him, though it was impossible to say why.

Jack was the first man on deck when the watch was called.

He was active, obedient, and respectful. I never remember hearing either the first or second officer find the slightest fault with his seamanship, and they were both Tartars, I can tell you.

We used to say, however, that Captain Granger didn't like any one but himself.

He was a youngish man—somewhere about thirty, I think—very good-looking, and tremendously self-important. He even held himself aloof from the mate and second mate, seldom having anything to say to them, except in the direct way of duty.

There was something else that was peculiar about him—a very unpleasant peculiarity, too.

We had not been at sea three days before it began to be talked about in the fore-castle. He drank far more than was good for him, and used to come on deck when it was very evident that he had been indulging pretty freely, though he was shrewd enough not to attempt to give any orders, except when actually necessary, and then in the briefest possible manner, the second mate being, of course, his mouthpiece.

Jack used to watch the captain rather curiously; but he was a very reticent sort of fellow, and said but little about the matter, except to me, for whom he seemed to have rather a liking; perhaps for the reason that we were nearly the same age, and he also knew that I was before the mast simply as a preliminary to some day reaching the quarter-deck.

He himself was a thorough navigator, as I soon discovered, and having an old "Epitome" in my sea-chest, Jack began helping me study out the more difficult questions, over which, unaided, I had puzzled in many a watch-below.

So matters went on till we got fairly past Hatteras, and with a stiff westerly breeze were bowling merrily to the southward, every stitch of drawing canvas being set.

We made a quick run to the Florida Straits, with a continuation of fair weather, and Captain Granger seemed to think this an excuse for still further indulgence in liquor. And when he came on deck in this condition somebody was sure to catch it, for he had a most fearful temper.

One day Jack was at the wheel, steering, as he always did,

like clockwork. I was doing some rattling in the main rigging.

"You're off your course there!" I heard the captain sing out from the cabin, where he used to lie on a lounge and watch the "tell-tale" compass that was hung in the skylight overhead.

"No, sir," Jack answered respectfully. "She's exactly on the point S.S.E."

Captain Granger came flying up the companionway steps, his face fairly purple with rage—and whisky.

"Do you dare contradict me, you——"

And he added an epithet which no true man can hear and not resent, in any place, excepting on shipboard. And to do it there is called mutiny.

Jack's face was perfectly white. I noticed that he set his teeth together pretty firmly, and his small, muscular hands gripped the spokes of the wheel a little harder, but he said nothing.

"Why don't you answer?" roared Captain Granger, with an oath, and at the same time he struck the young man a heavy blow full in the face.

Well, he got his answer, for Jack sent his arm and fist out very suddenly, and Captain Granger went down as though a cannon ball had struck him.

Then there was a how-do-you-do! Of course the second mate rushed aft; and when the captain picked himself up he began shouting to Mr. Barrett to put the mutinous scoundrel in irons.

Oh, how wild Captain Granger was, as he held on to his nose, and began to dance round the deck! But all the same, he kept at a proper distance from the man at the wheel.

The second mate got the irons, and was coming along the gangway with them in his hand, the mate, Mr. Marline, who had just turned out, following him, rubbing his eyes.

All at once Jack sang out, short and sharp:

"There's an 'ox-eye!' You'd better shorten sail pretty quick, Mr. Marline!"

Mr. Marline gave one look to windward. There was a round, vaporish-looking cloud, the only one in the clear sky, but it was coming toward us at a rate of speed almost incredible to any one who has never witnessed an "ox-eye" squall, and increasing as it advanced.

Oh, then there was "hurrying in hot haste!" The watch came tumbling out, half dressed; everything was left go fore and aft; but before the sails were half clewed up the squall was on us.

I really thought the staunch little brig was gone, for one brief moment. The force of the wind pressed her over, and held her there, with her lee rail buried under the foaming surge, while the terrible wind went rushing through the rigging with a roaring sound which can be compared to nothing that I ever heard before or since, though I have witnessed three typhoons—two in the South Pacific, and one in the China Seas.

The mainsail blew out of the bolt-ropes before one could say "Jack Robinson!" and the jib and staysail were torn into a thousand strips.

Then the brig began to rise to her bearing, and was put off before the wind till we could get her under short canvas.

And by the time this was done the squall was over, and the sun shining again; so, of course, the next order was to make sail.

Well, we bent the new mainsail and a couple of jibs, Jack being all the time at the wheel, while Captain Granger was mopping his eye in the cabin.

Whether he thought that it would hardly do to lessen the watch by one man in a squally latitude, or whether he had some other punishment in view, I cannot now say, but certain it was that nothing more was said about putting Jack in irons.

On the following morning we sighted the Island of Cuba, and nearly all that day were running down the eastern shore, in company with the usual fleet of fishermen, sponge hunters, turtle catchers, wreckers, and small merchant vessels, with which the Caribbean Sea abounds.

Jack was sent up to the foreroyal yard to make up a gasket. While thus employed, Captain Granger came on deck with a musket in his hand.

Supposing that he was going to toss a bottle overboard, to use as a floating target, as he often did, no one paid any attention to him.

I was at the wheel, and as I glanced up from the compass card I remember thinking to myself that Captain Granger looked like a shipmate of mine who went crazy from being exposed to the hot sun in an open boat in which five of us, from the foundered schooner A. B. Williams, drifted about on the line for nearly a week, with just enough food and water to keep us alive.

His face was swollen and distorted, his lips dry and livid, while his eyes—well, they had a sort of glare in them that one never sees in a perfectly sane person.

"The old man will be mad pretty soon, at this rate," I thought to myself, when all at once Captain Granger, after looking about him a bit, sang out:

"Where's that fellow Jack?"

"Aloft on the foreroyal yard, sir," answered the second mate.

And then what does Captain Granger do but clap the cocked musket to his shoulder, and take as steady an aim at Jack as his trembling hands would allow!

If I knew that he would have shot me the next moment, I should have done the same thing.

"Jack! Jack!" I shouted. "Jump for your life!"

He glanced round like lightning, and even as the musket cracked sprang straight from the dizzy height.

Down through the air he came, as straight as a die, and in another moment the water closed over his head. But he reappeared directly, and we saw him strike out for a little lateen-sailed boat that was spinning through the water like a racer.

They hauled him aboard, and Captain Granger shook his fist at the retreating boat, and then at me, after which he dived into his cabin, muttering:

"I haven't done with you yet, my fine fellow!" while the second mate stood staring after him, aghast.

And he hadn't.

That evening we took a pilot off the mouth of the harbor, and by midnight we were alongside the Rial quay.

In the morning all hands got ready to leave, though the yellow fever was raging terribly on shore. We preferred running the risk of being carried off by this terrible scourge to being shot at by a half-crazy captain.

Captain Granger came on deck, smoothly shaved, and neatly dressed in an irreproachable suit of white duck.

He was perfectly sober, and though adorned with a black eye, looked quite gentlemanly, as he was expecting the brig's Cuban agent and consignee on board.

Three gentlemen came down the quay just as we, the crew, were getting ready to put our things over the rail.

Two of them were strangers; the other was our shipmate, Jack. Of course, we lingered a little, to see what would be the result.

The party came directly on board.

Captain Granger scowled at Jack, who, rather to our surprise, wore a remarkably nice suit of white flannel, and an expensive Panama hat.

Jack smiled, but said nothing. Captain Granger extended his hand to Senor Pepito, the agent, who coolly declined it.

"Captain Granger," said the senor, turning to Jack, "I s'all have the honor to you introduce my very good friend, Captain John Radford, whose father it is that does own the Psyche."

Talk of a man being completely taken aback! Why, Captain Granger was literally paralyzed, and before he could command himself to speak, Captain John Radford stepped forward.

"I will trouble you to take your things ashore as soon as possible, Captain Granger," he said, very quietly, but in the coldest, iciest way imaginable, "for I propose relieving you of command and taking the brig back to Boston myself."

Captain Granger's florid face changed to an unhealthy white.

Twice he tried to speak, but no words came from his livid lips.

Turning on his heel, he disappeared in the cabin, and an hour later the Psyche knew Captain Samuel Granger no more.

I need hardly say that the Psyche's crew stayed by her. And that evening "Captain Jack"—as we termed him among ourselves—called me aft, where, under the awning spread over the quarter, he told me the whole story.

He himself had been away at sea, master of the ship Shakespeare, for three years, when Captain Granger took charge of his father's brig, and, by artful misrepresentations, contrived to win the affections of old Mr. Radford's daughter, a young and confiding girl.

On his return, Captain Radford, who had heard intimations that Captain Granger's private habits were not above reproach, though he knew nothing personally of the man himself, found that both his father and sister would listen to nothing that he could say, and therefore Captain Jack resolved to see for himself what sort of a shipmaster Captain Granger could be.

So it was that he shipped before the mast in the Psyche, with the results that I have narrated, and it is to his friendship that I owe my own advancement in the merchant service.

It is said that the largest gold coin now in circulation is the gold ingot, or "lool," of Anam, a French colony in Eastern Asia. It is a flat, round gold piece, and on it is written in Indian ink its value, which is about forty-five pounds. The next sized coin to this valuable but extremely awkward one is the "obang," of Japan, which is worth about ten pounds, and next comes the "benda," of Ashantee, which represents a value of about nine pounds. The California fifty-dollar gold piece is worth about the same as the "benda." The heaviest silver coin in the world also belongs to Anam, where the silver ingot is worth about three pounds; then comes the Chinese "tael," and then the Austrian double thaler.

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